

Ananias and Sapphira Lie to God

(Acts 4:32 – 5:12)

Introduction

[Teacher, put on a mask and ask the children:] "*Why do people wear masks?*" (So they can pretend to be something or someone they aren't; or, to hide who or what they really are.) Is it possible to hide who we are or pretend to be someone else without wearing a mask? (Yes!)

The husband and wife in our lesson today tried to fool all their friends in their church group by pretending to be something they were not. Do you think they fooled God? Why not? (God is all-knowing!)

Opening Prayer

Father, You hate that which is false. It grieves Your heart when we are dishonest. There is no such thing as a little white lie. All falsehood is sin to you. I pray that this morning as we learn about the horrible consequences to Ananias and Sapphira for telling lies, it will prick our hearts and cause us to strive to be honest in all we think, say, or do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

The righteous hate what is false. (Proverbs 13:5)

And/or

Surely You desire truth in the inner parts. (Psalm 51:6)

Lesson

The last few weeks we've been learning about the early Christians. After Jesus ascended back up to Heaven, we learned that God sent the Holy Spirit to the believers. Who remembers what happens when we're filled with God's Spirit? (He gives us the power to say, "No!" to sin and gives us the desire to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

He also gives us courage and boldness to tell others about Jesus so they will become followers of Jesus, too.

We learned that the Holy Spirit had given Peter and John special power to heal a lame man. And then the Spirit enabled Peter to boldly preach to the people about their need for Jesus.

Life for these early Christians was wonderful. God's blessings were upon them.

Acts 4:32-35

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. (33) The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. (34) There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them (35) and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

The early Christians were so excited to know the truth about Jesus and God's love for them that they wanted to live together like one big happy family. Verse 32 says, "*All the believers were of one heart and mind.*" There was no grumbling or strife among them. They took care of one another and helped anyone who had a need.

None of these Christians felt that what they had was their own; they wanted to share everything they had with the other believers.

Ask: Is it easy for you to share what you have with others?

Remember that every good and perfect gift is ultimately from God. (James 1:17) He has given us so much; we should be willing to share.

They were even willing to sell their houses or lands to help other believers. They gladly bought the money to the apostles who gave the money to those in need. Verse 34 tells us, "*There were no needy people among them.*"

Acts 4:36-37

For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. (37) He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, sold some land and brought the money to the apostles.

Now we're about to find out that even though the Holy Spirit had come and given the people special powers and gifts, they were not protected from Satan's temptations. Just like it is today, Satan is still actively trying to make believers sin against God.

Acts 5:1-2

*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.*

Selling your property and sharing the profits with the other believers was completely voluntary. No one was forcing them to sell their land. If believers did choose to sell something they owned, the money was theirs to use as they wanted. They could have kept it for themselves.

Ask: What did Ananias do that was so wrong?

He lied. After Ananias and Sapphira saw how well Barnabas was respected for his generosity, they wanted to appear generous, too. But they only brought part of the money to the apostles, and kept the rest for themselves.

Ask: Why did Ananias lie?

Ananias and Sapphira desired people's praise.

Acts 5:3-4

*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!"*

Ask: Who gave Ananias the idea to lie? (Satan filled his heart.)

Ask: Why does Satan want you to sin?

Satan, God's enemy, tries to get you to sin because he wants to keep God from doing powerful things in and through your life. And, he wants to keep you from having a bold witness and a powerful testimony.

God hates lying. If you lie, you have no part with Jesus. The Bible says that Satan is the father of lies and when you lie you are acting as if you are a child of the devil.

John 8:44 [Jesus speaking to the Jewish religious leaders.]

*For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for **he is a liar and the father of lies.***

God expects you to be truthful.

[Teacher, discuss how dishonesty is like a trap: one lie often leads to more, and before you know it, the lies have taken over.]

Ask: Ananias was talking with Peter, why does verse 3 say Ananias was lying to the Holy Spirit?

God knows everything. He knows the intentions of your heart.

Acts 5:5-6

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.

Wow! God's punishment was severe, wasn't it? Meanwhile, his wife didn't know what had happened to her husband...

Acts 5:7-10

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.*

Ask: Why do you think God judged Ananias and Sapphira's dishonesty so harshly?

All lying is bad, but it is especially bad among Christians because it ruins our testimony.

If you are trying to tell someone about the love of Christ and the benefits of becoming a Christian, why would they believe you if they know you are a liar?

God *had* to discipline Ananias' and Sapphira's sin because the church was just getting started and God had to impress on the people that He is serious about sin and our need to live holy, set-apart lives.

Ask: How come we don't die when we lie? [Allow for answers.]

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. When we sin, we deserve to die; God could take our lives if He wanted to, but because of His grace and mercy He waits for us to confess our sins to Him so He can forgive us. Yet, God chose to take the lives of Ananias and Sapphira so that people would know how serious He is about holiness.

So, Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was lying—saying they gave the whole amount, trying to make people think they were more generous than they really were. It was their choice whether or not to sell their land and how much to give.

God knew their heart and punished both of them for their sin. God knows when a person is pretending to be a sincere follower of Christ.

[Teacher, write "*hypocrite*" on the board.] The word *Hypocrite* is a Greek word for "*stage actor*." That's why we use this word to describe

someone who pretends to be what he is not. Greek hypocrites (actors) used to wear masks to play out their parts.

Ask: When are some times kids might be tempted to be hypocritical? [Allow discussion.] (Pretending to be smart or clever, or showing off or bragging about yourself, thinking that that others would like you.)

Ask: Have you ever known someone who **exaggerated** when telling a story? (Exaggeration is lying!)

Ask: What are some hypocritical things people sometimes do in church? (Pretend to be religious, know God's word, be big prayers.)

When you are a hypocrite, a play actor, you may be able to fool some people with lies, but God is not fooled! He knows what you are really like inside. We are not to think for a minute we can get away with lying; God knows our every thought! (See Hebrews 4:12)

Ask: What was the effect of Ananias' and Sapphira's harsh and sudden punishment on the believers?

When Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was punished, two things happened:

Acts 5:11-12

***Great fear** gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened. (12) 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.*

It says great fear came over the people and the apostles performed many miracles. When it says that "*great fear gripped*" the people, it just means that everyone who heard what happened to Ananias and Sapphira had a healthy respect for God. They knew God takes sin very seriously. And when the people took God seriously, the Holy Spirit began to work in mighty ways through the apostles among the people; many miracles were performed.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help us to always be truthful with You and with others. And, help us to be honest in everything we do. We also ask You to help us to be generous with the things You have given us. Don't let me hold back from sharing with others, like Ananias and Sapphira did. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Object Lesson

Brown-E's Trick

[Teacher, before class, place many brown E's cut out of brown construction paper in a baking pan covered with aluminum foil. Act VERY excited!]



I made brownies!! I cooked all morning, and out of the goodness of my heart, I brought in brownies for all of you!! The kitchen smelled so good!! They cooked and they cooled. Would you like to have one? [Kids should be excited and ready for a yummy brownie. Carefully peel away the foil and begin handing out the "Brown E's". Allow the children to react to your trick.]

What? Why are you disappointed and upset?

Did I have to bring you brownies today? (No.)

Did Ananias and Sapphira HAVE to give all of their money to the church? (No.) They tried to trick people in believing they were more generous than they really were.

My bringing you brownies would have been a treat. A blessing. A gift. Instead, what did you receive? (Nothing but a trick.)

[Teacher, have some real brownies for the children to eat at the end of class.]

Game Center

Bowling

Spray-paint 10 2-liter-sized, plastic soda bottles. Set them up like bowling pins. Have each child take a turn, using a rubber ball. For a correct answer to a review question, a child gets an opportunity to bowl. The child or team gets points for every pin knocked down.

Use the following questions in a discussion:

1. Why did the people share everything they had? (None of these Christians felt that what they owned was their own. The believers took care of one another and helped anyone who had a need.)
2. What was Ananias' and Sapphira's sin? (Lying and hypocrisy. Saying they gave the whole amount and trying to make people think they were more generous than they really were.)
3. Did Ananias and Sapphira HAVE to give all of their money to the church? (No! They were trying to look generous while being greedy.)
4. Why was God's punishment so harsh? (All lying is bad, but it is especially bad among Christians because it damages their testimony. Why would anyone believe you if they think you are a liar?)
5. Why does Satan want you to sin? (He wants to keep you from having a bold witness and having a powerful testimony.)
6. What was the effect of Ananias' and Sapphira's harsh and sudden punishment on the believers? (Great fear came over the people and the apostles performed many miracles.)

7. How come we don't die when we lie? [Allow for answers.] What do all people deserve? [The wages of sin is death.] The fact that we do not die when we sin is grace and mercy from God. God could take our lives if He wanted to, but for some reason he chose to do this with Ananias and Sapphira. They became an example to the early church.
8. What can we learn from Ananias and Sapphira? (If we want to be godly, then we must remember that God knows our thoughts and motivations, and that He cannot be tricked.)
9. What should we do when we begin to think about tricking someone, or saying something about another person, or trying to do something we know is wrong when we are by ourselves, or some other sin? (The Bible tells us to take every thought captive. When we begin to start thinking negative thoughts about a person or situation, then we need to tell ourselves, "*No! Stop thinking that! God wants me to be honest. He wants me to be pure. He wants me to honor him all the time.*")

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