

INTRODUCTION

Acts 5:1-11 presents one of the most sobering moments in the early church. Just before this passage, believers were experiencing the power of Spirit-filled generosity. People freely sold their possessions and shared with anyone in need. In the middle of this culture of grace-filled generosity, Ananias and his wife Sapphira also sold a piece of property and brought some of the money to the apostles. The problem was not that they gave only part of the money. The problem was that they presented their gift as though it were the full amount. While appearing fully devoted, they secretly kept something back. Through the discernment of the Holy Spirit, Peter exposed their deception and made it clear that their lie was not simply against the church, but it was against God Himself.

This passage is about much more than money. It reveals the danger of pretending to be spiritually committed while our hearts are not truly surrendered. Hypocrisy within the church does real damage. People come to church looking for healing, hope, and truth. When they experience deception or hidden agendas, it can make trusting the church, and sometimes trusting God, more difficult.

The challenge for us is not whether we look committed, but whether our hearts are truly aligned with what we present to others. A healthy church is not built on image, talent, or spiritual appearance. It is built on authenticity – people who are honest before God and one another, allowing His grace to transform us from the inside out. May we be a congregation that makes the church a safe place, not a stage.

GETTING STARTED

1. What’s one thing that helps you feel welcomed when you enter a new place?
2. If you could describe a healthy community in one word, what word would you choose?

LET’S GET PERSONAL

1. Have you ever felt pressured to present a certain image to others?
2. Pastor Jonathan highlighted how hypocrisy can lead to church hurt. How have you seen inconsistency between belief and behavior affect people’s trust in the church?
3. What does it look like for a church to truly be a safe place for people who are seeking God?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What is one area of your life where God may be inviting you to practice greater honesty or transparency?
2. As you close your time with your group, pray together and ask God to guard your hearts against the temptation to prioritize appearance over authenticity.
3. ***Want to dig deeper?*** Take a look at the following passages: Acts 5:1-11; Joshua 6:17-18; Ephesians 4:4; James 3:17; Matthew 15:7-8; Matthew 23:25; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13; James 1:14-15.

RENEW YOUR MIND

'But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?" - Acts 5:3