

Community Group Discussion Questions

“The Provision”

Acts 5:1-11

Sermon Series Title: “Church Beginnings”

Sermon Series Summary: From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

Setting: The book of Acts is a transitional book between the resurrection of Jesus and the established local churches of the epistles. With Jesus’ call to the church in Acts 1, we see how the gospel spreads to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

Summary: After seeing the church’s glory in ch. 4, we see sin through the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira. The sin is not that they withheld their proceeds, but their intention was to deceive the church. We fall into the same sin, pretending we are better/holier than we are. Thanks be to God that the gospel shows us our sin, brings us to confession and repentance, and establishes us new in Christ!

Sermon Points:

1. What is the sin?
2. Why is it so serious?
3. Where is our salvation hope?

Main Idea: *“The gospel shows us our sin, leads us to hope, and empowers us to faithfulness.”*

Before you read the passage...

1. In your opinion, what is the worst sin in the church?

(Answers may vary.)

In this week’s passage, we see sin in the early church. It was so heinous during this time that the sinful members died in judgment. However, it may not be “the worst sin” we just talked about.

Read Acts 5:1-11

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2. What do you think about God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira? How would you respond if someone said that this story is too extreme?

(Answers may vary.)

In one sense, it seems very extreme. They died, because they lied? People lie all the time. Why would God punish them for this little sin? However, if we think like that, we are diluting God's standard to meet our expectations. But in reality, it's the opposite. God is our Creator and Sovereign Lord, and His standard is the one that matters. He is not to submit to our expectations, but we are to submit to His standard: perfection or judgment.

This begs the question of why God doesn't judge people by immediate death over lies today. In answering this question, we must step back and look at all of Scripture and eternity. Even though God may not judge our sins today like Ananias and Sapphira, He has judged them on the cross of Jesus Christ or will judge them on the last day. We must not deceive ourselves to think that there is no judgment for sin, just because we are not seeing it.

At the same time, we must understand that this period of the early church was a special redemptive epoch in history. The Holy Spirit came down, and the church is going forth. The Messianic age has been inaugurated, and salvation has come. Because of this special period in history, there was immediate judgment for Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit and testing God.)

3. What does Ananias and Sapphira this teach us about hypocrisy and deceit?

(This shows us how much hypocrisy and deceit grieve the heart of God. Hypocrisy is rooted in selfishness and pride. Selfishness is shown in that the heart of hypocrisy is for the glory of self. Pride is shown in that there is no remorse for lying and appearing holier/better than one actually is. When we look at Jesus' ministry, He was the harshest on the Pharisees and Jewish leaders for their hypocrisy more than the "sinners" in that society.

Ananias and Sapphira also show us that lying to the church is lying to God. Attempting to deceive the church is lying to and testing the Holy Spirit. In our passage, the couple have forgotten that God is the ultimate judge, and He who sees all knows all. That's why Peter calls this sin a testing of God. When we deceive others, we forget about this truth as well.

Deceit grieves the heart of God, because God is truth. The gospel is truth. Christianity is found upon truth. If it wasn't, then it wouldn't be salvific. Satan is the opposite of God and lies out of his character. When we attempt to deceive others, we are acting out of

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our sinful nature, following Satan, rather than acting out of our redemption, following our Heavenly Father.)

4. How does the gospel address this sin in our lives?

(The gospel is a sword that cuts through our deceit and hypocrisy. It shows us that we are more sinful than we can ever imagine. It shows us the truth of our hearts- that we are not as generous, holy, loving as we think we are. And it cuts our pride as we see that it took the sinless Son of God to be crucified shamefully to save us.

But at the same time, the gospel shows us that we are more loved than we can ever dare hope. Jesus has died. He rose again from the dead. He experienced the worst humiliation, so we can be with Him for all eternity. He endured the cross to receive the joy of receiving us. And He invites us into this joy.

This entrance into His love and joy is what empowers us to be faithful. We don't have to pretend and deceive. We can freely give, love, and live, because He has freely given, loved, died, and lived. We are broken but beloved, sinful but redeemed. And that transformative power allows us to live in truth and live in obedience with humility.)

Final Thoughts: *Like Ananias and Sapphira, there is judgment for our sin of hypocrisy and deceit. Either we will experience it for eternity, or it has already been experienced and paid for on the cross. The gospel is what reveals our sin, cuts our pride, breaks down our selfishness, and gives us hope of restoration and salvation. And it's that gospel that gives us the grace we need for faithful living today.*