

STUDY NOTES

The Acts of the Apostles

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

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The following content is based on the message “Giving God’s Way: The Story of Ananias and Sapphira” spoken on 03/06/16 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas.

To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>. Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material.

THE SCRIPTURE

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ²and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet. ³But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” ⁵When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. ⁷After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” ⁹But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. ¹²Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed (ACTS 5:1-16).

GIVING FREELY AND PURELY

This chapter comes on the heels of stories of people giving sacrificially to the early church. We learn that everyone was selling their property and giving the proceeds to the church leaders who would then administer those funds to those in need. BUT (and this is a big but), in ACTS 5:1 we meet Ananias and his wife Sapphira who

conspired together to lie about how much they made from the sale of their land, only giving part of what they earned.

They didn’t understand the Biblical principles of ***giving freely and purely***. In ACTS 5:4 Peter reminded Ananias that he had been under no compulsion to sell his land and even if he sold it, he still could have retained the proceeds. The act of dedicating the land to the community was strictly voluntary. Once pledged, however, it became a wholly different matter. It had been dedicated to the community.

Luke tells us that they “kept back” some of the proceeds, which means to pilfer or to embezzle. The same verb occurs in the Greek version of JOSHUA 7:11, in the story of Achan, who took from Jericho some of the booty that God told them to destroy. Like Ananias and Sapphira, Achan received a judgment of death from God and Luke saw similar judgment here.

God call us to give freely:

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 CORINTHIANS 9:7).

And to give purely:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven (MATTHEW 6:1).

We don’t give to get attention or accolades from men and we don’t give because we somehow think we will earn more favor with God.

Give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. ⁴²“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others (LUKE 11: 41-42).

Questions:

- Why do you think God wants us to give freely, not under compulsion? Do you see how God has given freely to us?
- Have you ever wanted attention for your good deed? Why do you think that is? Is the love of God not enough of a reward for us?

DON'T GIVE INTO TEMPTATION

In this passage (v.3) we learn that Ananias allowed the archenemy of the Spirit, Satan, to enter his heart. In the bible we are encouraged to resist temptation:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith... (1 PETER 5:6-9)

One thing to note about temptation is that it comes from the outside in AND the inside out.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above (JAMES 1:14-17).

The enemy Satan provides external temptation but there are desires in us that if not checked will cause us to give into that temptation and not resist it. Much like a fisherman using a lurer to hook an unsuspecting fish, Satan casts his lines of temptation in front of us hoping we'll bite on a cheap imitation, settling for less than God's best.

Jesus says that we don't need to be tempted by the things of the world because He will give us all we need:

Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the nonbelievers seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (MATTHEW 6: 31-33).

This is why James says:

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. (JAMES 1:16-17)

If everything good comes from God and He'll give us all we NEED (not want), then we don't have to be tempted by anything.

Questions:

- *Why are we tempted by the things of the world (the things that Satan offers)?*
- *Do you know what tempts you most? How can you set up safeguards in your life to help you resist those temptations.*

Jesus says that where our treasure is there our heart will be also. Perhaps we should do an inventory on what our treasure is. Maybe this is why we are constantly tempted...because our treasure is in the things of this world, and not in the things of God. Consider this:

- *If looks are your treasure, you'll always feel ugly.*
- *If being skinny is your treasure, you'll always feel fat!*
- *If knowledge is your treasure, you'll always feel dumb.*
- *If being yoked is your treasure, you'll always feel puny.*
- *If money is your treasure, you'll always feel like there's not enough.*

GIVING GOD'S WAY MEANS NO ONE LACKS

From the beginning of the movement of God, He promised his people:

There will be no poor among you; for the Lord will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— ⁵if only you will strictly obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. (DEUTERONOMY 15:4-5)

But for this to be true, the church has to be the church and the church as to respect and fear God. We see in verses 5, 11 and 13 that great fear, which means great respect and awe occurred after this event.

It should be noted that this is the first time the word “church” (ekklēsia) occurs in Acts, which denotes the people of God gathered as a religious community. Where there is that unity of trust, that oneness of heart and mind, the church flourishes in the power of the Spirit. Where there is duplicity and distrust, its witness fails.

It seems like Ananias and Sapphira:

wanted the benefits of the church but not the burdens of the church.

They wanted to belong and they wanted the accolades for giving. They wanted to be associated with the church but not sacrifice for the church. In essence, they were using the church. Keep in mind:

When we use the church we don't fear God.

We live in a “friends with benefits” culture that says take what you want but there's no need to serve, sacrifice or commit to each other. God was teaching that He wouldn't allow His church to be taken advantage of like that.

Questions:

- *What do you fear?*
- *When is fear a good thing?*
- *Why don't most people fear God or respect the church, even those in the church?*
- *Talk about how giving our time, talent and treasure is a sacrifice.*

GOD GIVES LIFE

Even though we see God ending physical life in this passage we all know that we too will have our physical lives end one way or another. What God is really concerned with is Spiritual life. God gives spiritual life by giving His son freely and purely. Jesus secures our salvation by not giving into temptation but by defeating death and promising eternal life to all who call on His name!