

Lesson 6

Ananias and Sapphira

Each day our lives show signs of growth. We grow in body and mind. We gain understanding of various subjects, and with God's help, we are learning important spiritual truths through this study of Acts.

The Apostle Peter's life was transformed as he served Jesus with the Holy Spirit's power. Peter, the apostle who once denied Jesus, is now a leader of the early church. This church is described in Acts 4. People had heard Peter's message: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:38). Their lives were changed and their actions demonstrated a unity of spirit and purpose. These new believers even sold their possessions to provide for the needs of each other.

God's work progressed in the early church: the Holy Spirit was given, people were healed and most importantly, thousands received the gift of salvation.

However, when God's work increases, difficulties arise. In Acts 5 we see a Christian congregation dealing with disobedience that threatened the growing church.

Hypocrite

A hypocrite is a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion. A hypocrite says one thing but does another or pretends to be something he is not.

The root word for hypocrite comes from the Greek word *hypokrites*, which means "actor"—one who puts on a mask to play a role.

The main characters of this lesson are a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira. Their actions are a clear example of hypocrisy. Their words revealed one attitude but their hearts harbored another. What does God say about hypocrisy?

1. Read Matthew 6:5. What do the hypocrites do?

Pray so that everybody can see what they are doing.

2. To what does Jesus compare the hypocrites in Matthew 23:27-28? What else does He say about them?

Whitewashed tombs. They are beautiful on the outside but inside they are full of dead men's bones and uncleanness.

3. By nature our hearts are full of sin and deceit (Jeremiah 17:9). How should we respond when God reveals our sin and hypocrisy? I John 1:9

By confessing our sin to Him in repentance and faith.

Into the Word: Acts 4:32-5:16

1. In Acts 4:31-35, what were the believers in the early church doing for each other? Why? *Remember that the believers were all being filled with the Holy Spirit. They shared all things in common. Abundant grace was upon them all. Therefore, they were selling their possessions and sharing the proceeds among the believers as each had a need.*

Acts 4 ends with Barnabas selling some land and giving the proceeds to the Early Church. This was an act of love and generosity. But chapter five begins with a stark contrast and two people whose actions were very different from the actions of Barnabas.

Read Acts 5:1-11.

2. Barnabas had sold some land. Ananias and Sapphira sold some of their land too. But what did Ananias and Sapphira do differently than Barnabas? Acts 5:1-2? *Barnabas gave all the money he received from the sale of his property. Ananias and Sapphira deceptively gave only a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their property.*

3. Was Ananias required to sell his property or give away anything that he had? Was it wrong to give only a portion of the proceeds? v.4 No.

4. So what did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong? vv. 4 and 8 *Ananias and Sapphira kept some of the money for themselves but led Peter to believe that they had given all the proceeds of the land sale to the church.*

5. What did Peter say they were guilty of doing? vv.3-4, 9 *They were not merely lying to men; they were lying to the Holy Spirit of God.*

6. What were the consequences of Ananias and Sapphira's actions? *Instant death--"as he heard these words" (v. 5); she fell dead immediately (v. 10)*

7. God does not punish all hypocrites so suddenly or in such an extreme manner. But what do all sinners earn according to Romans 6:23? *Death*

Yet God gives a free gift to the repentant sinner, and that is eternal life. (TM: See also Romans 2:3-4.)

8. While we don't know why God punished Ananias and Sapphira immediately, what was the immediate response from the crowd? Acts 5:5, 11 *The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira brought the fear of God both to the believers and those outside the church. God's actions, even His quick wrath towards sin, bring glory to Him. Reference First Commandment and meaning. God is sovereign over all things, and we do not always understand His will and ways (see Isaiah 55:9).*

9. The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira brought fear and reverence to the believers. What else was happening in the church? vv.12 and 14 *At the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were taking place; the believers were all of one accord; and there were more and more believers added to the church.*

10. How did the people respond? vv. 15-16 *People were being brought from outside Jerusalem to be healed.*

Memory Verse

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered,
He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.
Hebrews 2:18

Extra Memory Challenge

Hebrews 4:15-16

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

New Ideas: Temptation

In this lesson Ananias and Sapphira are a clear example of what *not* to do when tempted to sin. God speaks of temptation in the Bible. He knows that as long as we live we will always be tempted to sin.

1. Where does temptation come from? James 1:13-14
 - NOT from God
 - from *each person's own lust* (NIV "evil desire")

Being tempted to sin is not sin, but giving in to temptation does bring us to sin. Sin separates us from God. Sin is disobedience to God and always has consequences.

2. How can we resist temptation?
 - Mark 14:38 *Watch and pray.*
 - I Timothy 6:9,11 *flee from temptation and pursue (seek after) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance (not giving up), and gentleness*
3. What does Jesus know about temptation?
 - Hebrews 2:18 *Jesus was tempted while He was suffering in His life on earth. Therefore, He is able to help us when we are tempted.*
 - Hebrews 4:15 *Jesus was tempted in all things, just as we are. The difference between Him and us is that He never sinned.*
4. What do the Scriptures promise when we face temptation?
 - I Corinthians 10:13 *God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will also provide a way of escape so you can endure it.*

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. In what areas have you been tempted to do things that are wrong? What things in your daily life present temptations to you? (internet, peer group, etc.)
If students aren't comfortable discussing out loud, encourage them to write down specific comments/thoughts.
2. What can you do to help someone who is facing temptation? When someone has given in to temptation, what can you do to help them overcome it?
Answers will vary for each of these questions but may include being willing to be a friend, to listen, to pray for them and with them, support them, help them find someone to help them if this is needed (Gal 6:2). If someone has given in to temptation don't give up on them, remind them that God is very willing to forgive if we turn to Him in repentance (1 John 1:9) Be willing to be strong for them if they become tempted again with the same issue, possibly help them plan to avoid situations that will open them up to temptation, Remember also that everyone faces temptation at some time in their life, and temptation is different for each person.
3. Ananias and Sapphira seemingly wanted to look good to the congregation. Read Matthew 6:1. What are ways you may try to act like a Christian or be someone you aren't? Why?
If students aren't comfortable discussing out loud, encourage them to write down specific comments/thoughts.

Daily Devotions

Monday: I John 4:1-6
Tuesday: I John 4:7-12
Wednesday: I John 5:1-12
Thursday: I John 5:13-21
Friday: II John 1-13
Saturday: III John 1-8
Sunday: III John 9-14

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CONFESSIONS, CREED, AND CATECHISM

* Lesson 6: Augsburg Confession – Article 4 (Justification)

“How can I be saved?” or in other words, “How can I be justified?” Article 4 of the Augsburg Confession answers plainly that our sins have been forgiven and we are righteous before God by grace through faith in Christ. We are justified because His righteousness is credited to us so that we are declared not guilty of sin.

1. How many people need to be saved according to Romans 3:23? How are they justified according to verse 24?
All people need to be saved. They are justified freely by the gracious redemption of Christ.

2. In what did Abraham believe? (Romans 4:3) For whom is the promise of God’s righteousness by faith intended? (Romans 4:16)

Abraham believed in God’s promise of salvation. All people are meant to receive the promise of God’s righteousness by faith.