

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 4:32-5:11



The Spirit of God is poured out in grace, discipline, and power.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The Spirit of God is poured out in heart-changing power. It is amazing to read about the early Christians and how the Spirit of God worked grace into their lives. We can forget that the descriptions are of brand-new believers, not people who had been Christians for years and years.

The first believers were so affected by the gospel and the infilling of the Spirit that they were glad to sell their possessions and share with those who were in need. Joseph sold a field and brought the money to the apostles so that those in need could be cared for.

The Spirit of God is poured out in discernment. Acts 5:1-6 starts out, "But a man..." Luke is contrasting the generosity of Joseph with the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. Perhaps Joseph was praised or esteemed for selling his field and giving the money to those in need. Ananias did not have to sell his field. Nor did he need to give all the money from its sale. But Ananias sinned. He sold the field and pretended to give all the money while keeping some for himself. This was treated by God as a very serious matter. The Holy Spirit brought severe discipline for the good of all.

Peter confronted Ananias for lying. His words help all of us to remember that when we sin against each other, our greater sin is against God. Immediately, Ananias fell down dead, and a great fear of sin came upon those who saw. The Holy Spirit was working to keep the church pure.

The Spirit of God is poured out in power. - Many people were healed in the early church as the power of God was poured out for healing. Verse 14 tells us that more than ever, believers were added. We need to remember that 3,000 were converted after Peter's explanation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That means that thousands were being converted here as well. When people understood the gospel and saw the power of God, many put their faith in Jesus.

The compromise of Ananias and Sapphira had the potential to hinder this move of God. That is why the Lord judged them so severely. This swift judgment served to warn the early believers of the dangers of sin and of the fearful holiness of God.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the early church with great power. There was a mighty outpouring of grace in the lives of the new Christians. This move of the Spirit of God helped launch the advance of the gospel.

Ananias and Sapphira threatened to discredit the gospel and the work of God as the church was becoming established. They sold their property, but they wanted praise for giving everything. So they decided to keep some of the money secretly for themselves. God would not tolerate this lying selfish ambition. With the credibility of the gospel on the line, the Spirit of God killed them both. Thus, a holy fear fell upon all the people, and the integrity of the gospel was protected.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 56:7

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In Matthew 21:13 Jesus quotes this verse as He rebukes the money-changers and those who are turning the temple into a marketplace. Jesus was zealous that the house of God not be defiled by sin.

Similarly, in this week's passage in Acts, Ananias and Sapphira are judged swiftly for bringing sinful behavior into the house of God, the church.

Questions for reflection:

- Why does God judge sin? (God is holy and has no sin. Sin by definition is disobedience toward God. Just as light must cause darkness to disappear, so must God judge sin for the sake of His holiness.)
- Why did Jesus drive out the money-changers from the temple? (The focus of the temple was to be worship of God. These men were not at the temple to worship God. Rather they were there to make money.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

TWO FLASHLIGHTS

Supplies:

enough cookies for the entire class (Make or purchase cookies without nuts as some children have severe nut allergies.)

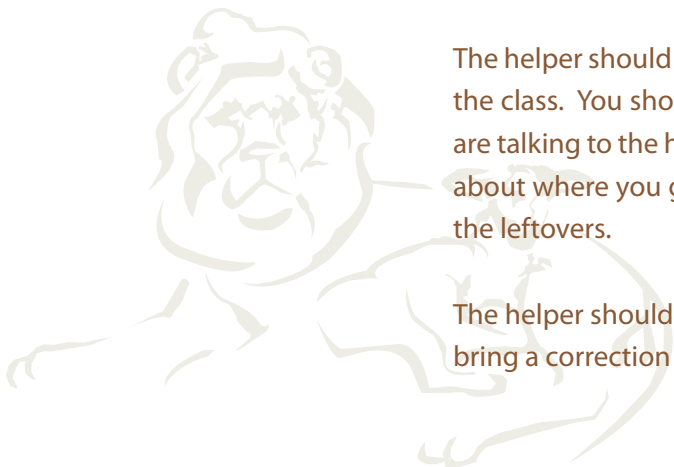
The object of this lesson is to illustrate the lying of Annanias and Sapphira.

Once class begins and you have the attention of your class, have your helper come in with a large container of cookies. He or she should ask you if you would like a cookie. You will reply yes. Then go on to ask if you can have enough cookies for your class. Tell you helper if she gives you thirty (the number of students you have) you will share the cookies with the class.

Once the helper agrees and leaves, start eating your cookie and ask the class if they would like some. They, of course, will say yes. Now it is time for your Ananias and Sapphira move. As you pass out the cookies break off a little piece of each for yourself. For some, just break off a little, but for others keep more for you. Keep the pieces in the container. As you go around the room, comment on how good these cookies are.

The helper should return and ask you if you had a chance to pass out the cookies to the class. You should answer that you passed them all out to the class. While you are talking to the helper, eat the pieces in the container. Your helper should inquire about where you got the pieces. You can tell the helper that they are just some of the leftovers.

The helper should confront you lovingly about where you got the pieces and then bring a correction to you. Use this as a lead into the Ananias and Sapphira story.



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TWO FLASHLIGHTS

Supplies:

- two flashlights - one without batteries and one very bright one
- a dark room

The object of this lesson is to help the children understand the nature of God's holiness and the judgment of sin.

Turn off the lights. Shine the flashlight and ask the children to tell you what happens to the darkness when the light shines upon it. The darkness flees instantly. The idea is to compare the light to God's holiness and the darkness to sin. One way to do this is to mix up the language. Tell the children that the light destroys the darkness or judges the darkness.

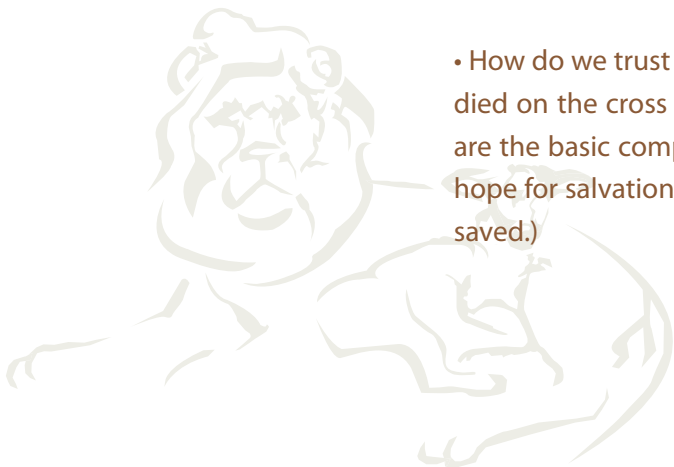
Next, shine the light without batteries. Ask the children to evaluate that flashlight. They will say that it does not work. Tell the children to assume the second flashlight is broken and cannot be fixed. Ask them if it is accurate to continue to call it a flashlight. Explain that if it cannot light, it is not a light at all. Perhaps it should be called a "flash nothing."

Explain to the children that God's holiness is like the flashlight and the light is like the judgment of God. Sin is the darkness. For God to truly be holy, He must judge sin. If he were to stop judging sin, He would not be holy. He would not be who He is.

Sometimes we think God should overlook sin, but that is not possible. Even in God's mercy toward believers, He did not completely overlook sin. Our sin was taken upon Jesus who God punished in our place. Because Jesus took our sin (darkness) and gave us His righteousness (light), we are light to God in Jesus and there is no need for God to judge us.

- Why should the holiness of God put a healthy fear in our hearts? (We cannot take sin lightly. God is serious about judging sin.)

- How do we trust in Jesus? (We need to have faith that Jesus is God and Man. He died on the cross for our sins and rose again that we might have new life. These are the basic components of the Gospel, and it is in the Gospel that we place our hope for salvation. When we fully trust in Christ and give Him our lives, we will be saved.)



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JOSEPH VS. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

Supplies:

costumes for the
characters

This is to flesh out just what might have been going on in Ananias' and Sapphira's heart. Feel free to use this script or ad lib the performance.

Ananias: Did you see what Joseph did today? He sold that field of his and gave all the money to Peter.

Sapphira: Yes, everyone made such a big deal about it. It seems like you have to do something special anymore to get attention.

Ananias: You know, we could sell that field we have.

Sapphira: Our field is worth three times what Joseph sold. Are you crazy?

Ananias: No, listen. We could sell it, give some of the money away to the disciples, and keep the rest for ourselves. We don't need all that land anyway.

Sapphira: If folks thought Joseph was generous, just think of what they would say about us!

Ananias: Sure, nobody counted Joseph's money. Why, he could have kept a bunch for himself anyway.

Sapphira: Yeah, I'll bet he did. No one would ever know.

Ananias: No one would ever know!

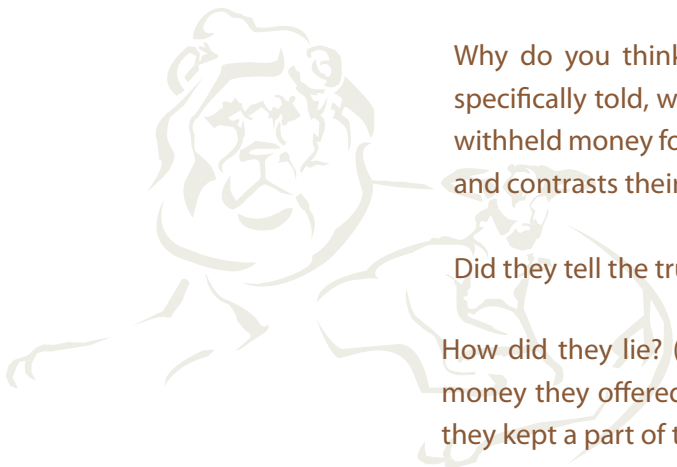
Read Acts 4:32-5:11 and then ask the class the following questions:

Why do you think Joseph sold his field? (Joseph sold his field to help the poor.)

Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira sold their field? (Though we are not specifically told, we can infer that they sold their field with mixed motives as they withheld money for themselves. The "but" in the first verse of chapter five connects and contrasts their story with that of Joseph.)

Did they tell the truth about their field? (No. They lied.)

How did they lie? (It is clear from the story that they implied or actually said the money they offered was all of the money from the sale of their field when actually they kept a part of the money for themselves.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Joseph placing the money before the Apostles feet from the sale of his field.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

LOOKING AT THE FEAR OF MAN

Supplies:

paper and pencil

After reading about Ananias and Sapphira, talk a little about what they did and why. Then have the children read 1Thessalonians 2:3-7. Paul is defending his ministry saying that neither greed nor the approval of man motivated his behavior.

Have the children answer the following question:

How could this passage help us to avoid the sins of Ananias and Sapphira? (Have the children put their answers in writing and then discuss their answers.)

It is likely that Ananias and Sapphira were trying to please man by pretending to give up all the money from the sale of their field to look good. Instead they faked generosity to cover up their greed in keeping part of the money back.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

"Great fear came upon all who heard it." – The Bible tells us that it is a good thing to fear God. Proverbs 1:7 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Proverbs 9:10 says it is the beginning of wisdom. Believers do not need to fear God's eternal judgment since Jesus has taken our punishment. But we cannot assume God will not judge sinful behavior. A healthy fear of the holy discipline of God will help us to avoid the sins that otherwise would entangle us. By judging Ananias and Sapphira, God demonstrated that He does not take sin lightly. Sin cost God the sacrifice of His Son. God is not mocked. Those who sow to please the sinful nature will reap destruction (Galatians 6:8).