

STUDY GUIDE

Reading for week 3: Acts 5



WHATS THE STORY?

As the church flourishes, it is met with some turbulent trials both internally and externally. However, the community overcomes, and the people of God continue to be a witness to the Kingdom of God, the love of Jesus, and the power of the Spirit.

LECTIO DEVINA

Prepare: Find a calm and quiet place to read and absorb the passage.

Read: Read through the passage. Listen for any words or phrases that jump out and listen for what God has to say.

Reflect: Try to understand what God could be saying to you through this passage.

Respond: Journal or pray to God, communicating about what you think God was telling you through Scripture.

Rest: Spend time contemplating, allowing God to work.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How would we respond to persecution today?
- What does a marriage committed to the church and discipleship look like?



FAMILY STUDY

Discuss:

What does the story of Ananias and Sapphira tell us that God wants from us?

How did God help the apostles through this situation?

A Deeper Look

Acts 5 begins with the story of a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira. They had taken notice of all of the kind-hearted actions of their fellow believers and wanted to participate. Their actions were fruitful, yet their motives were impure. Conspiring with each other, they sold some of their property and gave some of the profits to the Church, but claimed that they gave it all. In doing this it seems they were hoping to serve a little while gaining a lot of respect. Luke doesn't reveal how Peter knew, but their lie was seen and instead of gaining respect from their peers, they became a cautionary tale. Peter then makes the powerful and awe-inspiring statement "You have not lied just to human beings but to God."(v4)

The Church continues outward in verse 12. The apostles had been prepared for this moment by Christ in Luke 9, and they now go out again to "perform many signs and wonders among the people."(v12) Luke adds a note that the people held the apostles in high regard for the things they were exemplifying, but were still unsure and did not yet have the boldness to stand amongst them in Solomon's Colonnade. Despite this, as the apostles healed the sick and cast out impure spirits (with the power of the Holy Spirit) "more and more men and women were added to their number."(v14)

As they did miracles like Christ, they began to be persecuted like Christ was. Luke tells us that the Jewish leaders were still being fueled by their jealousy. They threw them in jail and intended to put them through a trial; however, when morning came, the apostles were nowhere to be found. Somehow, Peter and John has escaped, only to go back to the temple and do exactly what they had been doing when they were arrested the day prior. The members of the Sanhedrin were probably confused, but their goal of bringing them to trial that day was still accomplished. Peter's statement to the Sanhedrin was very clear and very simple: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"(v29) Often our walk and relationship with God is not this simple. Often wisdom and understanding of God is needed when making hard decisions. Sometimes decisions on what to do and how to act need to be made in seconds, sometimes over months and years. Often big decisions in our lives take a lot of prayer and discernment, but here in Acts 5 the apostles priority is simple, obey the message that came straight from an angel of the Lord: "Go, stand in the temple courts...and tell the people all about this new life."(v20) Can we respond to God in the same way today?