



## Parkway Fellowship

Epic Fails • I'm Not Hurting Anyone...Ananias and Sapphira •  
Acts 5:1-11; Galatians 5:16-25 • 11/24/2019

### MAIN POINT

To avoid the spiritual failure of lying to God and ourselves, we must acknowledge our sinful nature and walk in truth.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some examples of how lying is excused—if not celebrated—in our culture?**

**Is it OK for Christians to tell "little white lies"? Why or why not?**

**Share a time when choosing to tell the truth cost you something.**

The very first sin was the result of Adam and Eve believing the lies of Satan. Everyone is tempted to lie at some point. Many of us find lying a convenient way of navigating difficult situations, and we may even view it as the noble or right thing to do in certain situations, especially if we think our lie doesn't hurt anyone. In today's study, we'll see that what Ananias and Sapphira might have considered a "little white lie" was an epic fail with far reaching consequences.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Acts 5:1-11.

**What do you think about the severe and immediate consequence on Ananias**

**and Sapphira? Too harsh? Deserved? Worrisome? Explain.**

**What did Ananias and Sapphira do that would lead us to believe they were good people?**

Evidently, this couple noticed Barnabas had received recognition for his gift (see Acts 4:36-37), and they desired the same praise for themselves. So they pledged the full proceeds of their sale to the church; however, they decided to keep some of the money for their own personal use. This couple wanted acclaim without sacrifice and comfort without commitment. If Ananias and Sapphira had succeeded with their deception, the church's integrity would have been questioned and its unity damaged. The serious offense resulted in severe action. When Ananias fell over dead, great fear seized all who heard what had happened. They understood that to deceive God meant instant discipline.

**What are some ways we try to deceive God? Is it possible to deceive God? Why do we try?**

**From verse 3, we see that Ananias had a relationship with the Holy Spirit, but Satan, at some point, filled his heart. What does this tell you about Satan's desires for you? What does it tell you God will allow you to experience by your own free will?**

| Ask a volunteer to read Galatians 5:16-25.

**How would you define the term "sinful nature" in your own words (v. 16)? In contrast, what does walking (or living) by the Spirit mean?**

We are to live out the desires of the Spirit under the leadership of the Spirit with the evidence of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us to do what God wants, not what our sinful nature wants. The imperative "walk" is a Hebrew expression for "live," with the idea of conduct or lifestyle. Its tense conveys continuous action. The phrase "by the Spirit" can be rendered "in the Spirit"—in the sphere the Spirit governs. To keep on living in the Spirit is to continually live by His power—to go where He goes.

**If we are made alive by the Spirit, why do we still struggle with sins like lying, envy, and discontentment?**

At the moment we place our trust in Christ, our sinful nature no longer has control over us. Control now belongs to God and His Spirit. However, we live in a fallen world and remain in a battle against sin even after we become Christians. As long as we live, we will continue in this battle. Yet because we are in Christ, sin no longer dominates us, meaning, we are not

compelled to sin. Instead, we have the Holy Spirit inside of us who changes our desires and helps us resist sin. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul presented a catalog of “the works of the flesh” (v. 19) so these believers could be forewarned. The sins listed in these verses are the result of twisting God’s gifts into ungodly behaviors and not following the Spirit.

**In what situations are you still tempted to walk in the sinful nature?**

**How does one person's sin hurt other people?**

**From Paul's words here, what do you need to do so that the sinful nature can be defeated?**

Paul called for the Galatian believers to follow the Spirit’s leadership and to avoid destructive attitudes and behavior (see 5:25-25). The Spirit’s presence in our lives gives us the power we need to live out our faith. He replaces those sinful works with His fruit, and as a result we’re able to love and serve others rather than ourselves.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How would your life be different this week if you let the Spirit lead in all your actions?**

**In this week's message, the following next steps were given: Own that you sin hurts other people. Ask God to show you how envy is at work in your life. Be content in your relationship with Jesus. Ask God to show you where you're walking in the sinful nature. Crucify your sinful nature on the cross. Of these steps, which stands out to you the most as a way to personally apply the Scripture to your own life? Why?**

**What are some steps you can take so that you don't live in such a way that presents a lie to God and the community of faith? As a group, what is our responsibility to each other in that?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for His forgiveness and promise of eternity. Pray that he would continue to reveal areas of sin in your life and give you the faithfulness to submit those areas to Him. Pray for a greater desire to share the gospel in light of the grace God has shown you.

## COMMENTARY

## | Acts 5:1-11

5:1-2. This couple wanted acclaim without sacrifice and comfort without commitment. They caused the first demonstration of defeat within the ranks since the betrayal of Judas and denial by Peter. The outward act seemed so appropriate. Notice the identical wording in 4:37 and 5:2: Put it at the apostles' feet. What appeared to be public generosity was actually family conspiracy, but God was looking.

5:3-4. Apparently, the Holy Spirit revealed this deception to Peter. The Spirit had created unity in the church and was now offended at its rupture. We are amazed to discover that Satan can fill the heart of a Christian, especially since Luke uses a verb for fill which also appears in Ephesians 5:18.

Peter faced up to the responsibility much in the way he did in chapter 1 when explaining the Judas suicide. We see immediately that the sin lay not in failing to give all the money, but rather in pretending to do so. The basic issue here was lying, not only to the church but to the Spirit.

5:5-6. In this case the death resulted from sin, but the Bible reminds us that immediate death does not always occur. In the early verses of John 9, the disciples concluded that the blind man must be suffering because of his sin or that of his parents. Jesus reminds them that neither is the case, "But this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:3). God sees what happens in our hearts; and when hidden sin threatens to thwart the church's ministry, he may choose to deal with it severely.

5:7-10. The young attendants had buried Ananias and returned in three hours, quite possibly a record for first-century Jewish funerals. Amazingly, Sapphira came in with the same story, and it was *deja vu* all over again. Sapphira's narrative offers nothing new. In neither case did Peter pronounce a curse of any kind. Peter explained the sin, but God took care of the judgment.

5:11. The death of Ananias and Sapphira brought two results: fear in the church and fear in the city. As tempted as we might be to push this story into some dark corner of early church history, that would be a tragic mistake. It deals with money, greed, and deceit—all very popular problems in today's church. Deceit, disunity, and duplicity always undermine the Holy Spirit's work and always erode the effectiveness of the Christian community.

## | Galatians 5:16-25

5:16-18 The Galatian believers were at enmity spiritually. This ongoing struggle of strong desires (Gk *epithumia*; “craving, desire”) is why it was necessary to consciously walk by the Spirit in faith (v. 5). This was the only way not to carry out the desire of the flesh. The evidence of the Spirit’s leading is “the fruit of the Spirit” (vv. 22-23).

5:19-21 The “flesh” is usually understood as the sinful nature of mankind that continues even after a person becomes a Christian. Some interpreters take it to mean mankind in its unsaved state with its sinful thoughts and behavioral patterns continuing after conversion. When the desire of the flesh has the upper hand, the works of the flesh are obvious (Gk *phaneros*; “evident, visible”). Some are gross sins, but many are often viewed as “acceptable” behavior. Paul’s point is that this type of behavior as a pattern of life ( practice) is enough to cause a person not to inherit the kingdom of God (see the list in 1Co 6:9-10). Thus, a legalist cannot be justified by “the works of the law” (Gal 2:16) and a licentious person is excluded from the kingdom of God by the works of the flesh.

5:22-23. Paul contrasted the fruit of the Spirit to the works of the flesh. The word “fruit” refers to virtues only the Spirit can cultivate and bring to full growth in believers’ lives. Human nature apart from God can perform works; only the Spirit can produce fruit. For purposes of study, we can place the virtues in three groups: Christian, social, and personal conduct. The first three virtues in the cluster of the fruit of the Spirit show that only God can generate and maintain His desired harvest in the lives of believers. The second group of virtues in the cluster of Spirit-produced fruit pertains to believers’ relationships with others—their social virtues. The third group of virtues is made up of qualities that believers exhibit in personal conduct. Where the fruit of the Spirit is present, no law is necessary. One purpose of the law was to prevent evil, but Spirit-empowered Christians not only fulfill the law in principle but go far beyond what it requires. The presence of the fruit of the Spirit removes the need for the law’s restraints.

5:24-25 Christians belong to Christ Jesus and have been crucified with Him (2:20) along with their passions and desires. Such crucifixion is followed by resurrection living— by the Spirit (2Co 5:17). The logical way to live is to follow the Spirit and not lapse back into the passions and desires of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21).