

WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

LYDIA – THE BUSINESS WOMAN

Khanyile Moyo

We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed. (Acts 16:11-15 , NLT)

Who Is Lydia?

We know that Lydia was a lady from Thyatira and she lived in Philippi. She was a successful business woman who sold purple cloth and dye. Purple cloth was very valuable and expensive. It was often worn as a sign of nobility and royalty so we are pretty sure that she was wealthy. She was among the Gentile women who gathered outside Philippi on each Sabbath to pray to the God of the Jews.

What Can We Learn From Lydia?

1. God rewards those who honestly seek him. (Lamentations 3:25-26, Luke 6:21)
 - a. When we're in an attitude of expectancy, God will open doors for us.
2. God's plans happen according to his will and his timing. (1 John 3:20, Proverbs 6:9, Jeremiah 29:11-14, Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)
 - a. God is sovereignly at work behind the scenes, even when we're not aware of it.

How Can We Seek God Honestly?

1. Through the word. (2 Timothy 3:6, Joshua 1:8, Hebrews 4:12)
2. Through Prayer. (Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 John 5:14)
3. Making time for God. (Psalm 145:18, Psalm 62:8, Matthew 6:33)

We should remember that feeling when we first fell in love with Jesus, that moment you first accepted him as your savior. Ignite that fire and spend time with God and nourish that relationship with Jesus because you will get so much more from him that you would from the world arounds us. I encourage you to keep seeking God in every moment and he will turn up for you as he did Lydia all those years ago.

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DISHONEST TO GOD - SAPPHIRA

Sarata Seisay

Who Is Sapphira?

- Sapphira was the wife of a man named Annanias.
- She and her husband were supposed believers and members of the early new testament church.
- The only time that her and Annanias are mentioned in the bible is in regards to the verses in Acts 4:32-5:11.

So What Happened?

Acts 4:32-5:11

- All believers were sharing everything they had and were all one in heart and mind. There was no need amongst them, the spirit of God was working in all.
- Those who owned land or property would sell it (e.g Barnabas) and it was brought to the apostles and shared amongst the church.
- Annanias and Sapphira sold a piece of property, however with Sapphira's knowledge Annanias kept some of the profit for himself and gave only part to the apostles to share to the church.
- When both of them were confronted by Peter who discerned the deception through the holy spirit, they both denied keeping part of the profit for themselves.

What Was The Problem?

- Sapphira supported her husband in this deceptive spirit, instead of confronting him. Satan had filled their hearts (Acts 5:3).
- She was a co-conspirator in trying to deceive God, the apostles and the church.
- Sapphira and her husband wished to serve two masters and wanted to appear to serve only one (Matthew 6:24).
- They weren't required to give an offering (Acts 5:4), nobody was forced but they had ulterior motives and ambitions in their hearts of being seen on the outside by everyone as great disciples but in their hearts they weren't true disciples. "There are no great men of God only men who serve a great God"

Lessons We Can Learn

1. Living for Christ isn't a matter of spiritual performance. We must flee legalism and religion and ensure we have a true walk with God and true heart for His house. (Matthew 23:14, 1 Corinthians 16:14, 2 Corinthians 9:7)
2. God sees the heart and man sees the outside. (1 Samuel 16:7)
3. We must humble ourselves daily before the Lord and ask Him to test our motives and purify our hearts regularly in prayer. (Psalm 139:24)
4. We must be sincere about who we are and where we stand before God, ourselves and others. (Joshua 24:14, 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5)

Conclusion

Sapphira and her husband Annanias are a warning against living counterfeit christian lives. God is seeking true worshippers, those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Our desire to please Christ and to live righteously must be greater than how we look before men. We must aim to live sincere lives and ask the Holy spirit to reveal and test our hearts on a daily basis so that we do not deceive ourselves or others.