

## **Honest to Goodness**

### **Deception – Acts 4:32-37, 5:1-16**

#### **Introduction:**

Life in the early church must have been amazing. Less than ten years after Jesus left the disciples with the Holy Spirit to form a new community of faith certainly things would be perfect! But ... even where the Holy Spirit dwells people can resist His will, choose to do things their own way and consequently make a mess of things. Today's lesson shows some highs and lows of life in the early church of Jerusalem. May we learn from the positive aspects of the church and avoid the pitfalls Satan would set before the church.

#### **A very Happy Place**

Text: Acts 4:32-37

1. Describe the attitude of the early church towards – (vs. 32)
  - a. Each other
  - b. Property and possessions.
2. What does it mean to be “of one heart and soul”? (vs. 32)
3. Verse 33 introduces the idea of witness – with great power (Acts 1:8). How does this relate to the previous verse?
4. According to verse 33 what message did the disciples share with the people? Compare that to Acts 4:2. Can you feel the tension building?
5. What is happening in verse 34? Can this kind of action be legislated? Where were their offerings presented?

6. What was the other name for the Joseph of verse 36? What did it mean? What nickname would you want?

What a picture. In a society where property and wealth brought you prestige, those with wealth are bringing it and humbly laying it at the feet of Jesus. What a change in attitude and priorities when the Holy Spirit fills a person's life.

### **False Witnesses**

Text: Acts 5:1-11

7. Describe what happens in verses 1 and 2. Has anything wrong been done from the details we are given? (ie. was it wrong for Ananias to hold back some of the proceeds for himself?)
8. How does Peter know what has happened? (vs. 3) What is his attitude to Ananias? What appears to be the "lie" Peter is speaking about?
9. Verse four is important as it helps understand the practice of the early church. Was Ananias required to give all the money to the church? What is his sin?
10. We often hear people say "It was just a little sin"... is there such a thing? What makes Ananias' sin so grievous? (vs. 4)
11. What happened to Ananias when he heard the rebuke of Peter (vs. 5)? Does this always happen? Why in this instance? What was the response of the people?
12. Verse 6 shows respect even for the dead. Why?

13. Verse 7 opens the way for Sapphira to do the right thing and be honest about the money. This is her chance to do the right thing. Can you see any parallels between this story – the start of a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) - and the first creation story?
14. In verse 8 Peter confronts her and demands she tell him the truth. He repeats the story Ananias gave and she declares it is true. What will be the consequences of her dishonesty (vs. 9)?
15. What is the message to the church through this event?
16. How did the church respond according to verse 11? Do we still have that in the church today? Why or why not?

### **Signs of the Spirit’s Life**

Text: Acts 5:12-16

17. Verse 12 reminds us of words Jesus spoke before he left:  
<sup>12</sup>Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:12-14)

Explain.

18. What might be the message of verse 13?
19. What was happening in the life of the church? What was causing the growth in the church? What might we learn from this?

20. In what way are the actions of verse 15 a fulfillment of John 14:12? Does Jesus do this kind of miracle through his people today?
21. What is the message of verse 16? How will the religious establishment look at this growing movement? Who is behind their antagonism? (1 Peter 5:8)

**Conclusion:**

Following Jesus is not a game, a past time, or a hobby to be picked up when convenient. It is a new life. Ananias and Sapphira thought they could fool God, fool the apostles, but were very much mistaken. Many people who attend church do not take seriously the call to follow Jesus, and think that what they do through the week will be hidden from the church, and from God. How wrong they are. We may not see people immediately punished today, but someday we will all stand before Jesus to give an account of what we have done. May we live with reverent fear of the God who is both judge and Saviour.

Hymn: 536 "A Charge to Keep I Have"