



Ananias and Sapphira Lie to the Holy Spirit

Acts 4:32–5:11



LESSON GOAL

Students will fear being a hypocrite.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Barnabas brought his money to the apostles.
- Ananias and Sapphira gave money but lied to have the praise of men.
- Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and were killed.

KEY VERSE

“Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.” —Acts 5:5

APPLICATION

- Fear God who took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira.
- Share with those in need.
- Remember that God knows your heart.

NEXT WEEK

The Gospel Continues to Spread
Acts 5:12–42

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



4 Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

In his account of the Gospel’s spread, Luke records not only the Spirit’s work through the apostles but also the Spirit’s work upon those who heard the Gospel and repented. The first of these summaries of the Spirit’s work upon the new converts is in Acts 2:41–47. In Acts 2:41–47, Luke describes the new believers’ commitment to the apostle’s teaching, to fellowship, to communion, to prayer, to providing for each other’s needs and to meeting together. He presents a vibrant picture of how God had changed men’s hearts so that their chief delight was loving God and loving each other. Luke’s next major summary of the Spirit’s work upon the those who believed is in Luke 4:32–35. Following his summary description, Luke records a positive example of the Spirit-filled life in Barnabas. Barnabas’ positive example is followed by the negative example of Ananias and Sapphira who tried to mimic a Spirit-filled life by lying to God’s Spirit. God’s judgment of their sin is a powerful warning that God hates hypocrisy.

Living in the Spirit (Acts 4:32–4:37)

In his description of the Spirit’s work upon the believers, Luke gives several characteristics of the “multitude of those who believed” (Acts 4:32). (Luke no longer numbers how many believers there were, but refers to them instead as a multitude. The last count given was five thousand men in Acts 4:4.) The first characteristic was their unity of heart and soul (4:32). Because the believers were united in their love for God, they were not divided by splits and self-promotion.

The believers’ singleness of heart and mind manifested itself in the believers’ second characteristic, the way they viewed their possessions. Luke says, “Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (4:32). The believers’ love for God overflowed in a natural love for others as they shared with anyone who had a need (cf. Acts 2:44,45). Rather than viewing possessions as a self-satisfying, status symbol, the early church saw possessions as blessings to be shared. After describing the internal relations in the church, Luke describes how the Spirit gave the apostles power to “witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (4:33). The unified testimony of the apostles and the unified hearts of the believers resulted in those outside the community viewing all of them with “great grace” or favor (v.33).

The third characteristic of the community was that there was not “anyone among them who lacked” (Acts 4:34). There were no poor among the believers because those who possessed “land or houses sold them” and laid the proceeds at the apostles’ feet who would then distribute the money to whoever had need (4:34–35). (Laying the money at the apostle’s feet was a demonstration that the money was a gift to be used at the apostle’s discretion.) As Acts 5:4 makes clear,

the believers were not required to sell their homes or land. The believers who did so demonstrated the Spirit's work in their life by giving to meet the needs of their fellow believers. Luke gives one example of a saint named Josep who "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (4:37). Both in the book of Acts and the church today, Josep is better known by the name Barnabas, which means the "Son of Encouragement" (4:36). Barnabas, who plays an important role in Acts because of his acceptance of and journeys with Paul, was from the tribe of Levi but at one time had lived on the island of Cyprus off the coast of Greece. Barnabas was just one among many Spirit-led believers who were "of one heart and one soul," who "had all things in common," and who made sure that none of the believers were lacking (4:32,34).

Lying to the Spirit (Acts 5:1–11)

Just when the community of believers seems perfect, Luke records a sobering event in which two believers were judged for lying to the Holy Spirit. Luke describes how Ananias and Sapphira planned to deceive the apostles. Like Barnabas, "Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession" (5:1). (Verse 3 reveals that Ananias had sold land.) But unlike Barnabas, Ananias "kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it" (5:2). The Greek word for "kept back" has the idea of embezzling or robbing, suggesting that Ananias and Sapphira had agreed to give the total price of the land. But when Ananias laid the money at the apostles' feet, he gave only "a certain part" (5:2). Ananias intended for the apostles and community of believers to think that he had given all the money from the land. He wanted to be praised for his generosity and have the appearance of being spiritual. His heart was full of pride and hypocrisy.

The Spirit who was not deceived by Ananias' plot did not allow the apostles to be deceived either. Instead of praising Ananias for his gift, Peter rebuked Ananias for his wickedness. Ananias had chosen not to obey the Spirit but to listen to Satan who had tempted him to "lie to the Holy Spirit and keep part of the price of the land for yourself" (5:3). Even though tempted by Satan, Peter made clear that Ananias was guilty before God. Ananias had not been required to sell the land, had not been forced to give the money, and had "conceived this thing" in his heart (5:4). Although Ananias had tried to deceive the apostles, he ultimately had "not lied to men but to God" (5:4).

God's judgment upon Ananias' lie was swift. As soon as Ananias heard Peter's words, he "fell down and breathed his last" (5:5). Young men took Ananias' body, wrapped it for burial, and buried him in a tomb within three hours (5:6–7). The quickness of the burial was testimony that Ananias' death was God's judgment (Deut. 21:22–23). When Ananias' wife Sapphira came three hours later, she had not yet heard what happened to her husband (Acts 5:7). Like her husband, Sapphira was committed to deceiving the Spirit. Peter quickly revealed her dishonest heart by asking if the amount given by Ananias had been the price received for the land (5:8). When she affirmed her husband's lie, Peter rebuked her willingness to agree to test the Spirit of the Lord (5:9). The couple had such a low view of God's ability to know their hearts, His hatred of their sins, or His willingness to punish their deceit that they tested the Spirit by trying to see how much wickedness they could get away with. Peter swiftly announced God's judgment on Sapphira: "Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out" (5:9). Like her husband, Sapphira "fell down at his feet and breathed her last" (5:10). She also was quickly buried.

God's purpose in taking the lives of Ananias and Sapphira is seen twice in the account. Following Ananias' death, Luke records that "Great fear came upon all who heard these things" (Acts 5:5) and at the end of the account, Luke records

again “Great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things” (Acts 5:11). God wanted his people to fear His holiness. The church is indwelt by God’s Spirit and is His temple (I Corinthians 3:16). Ananias and Sapphira showed a blatant disregard for God’s holiness in an attempt to increase their own reputation. God’s destruction of Ananias and Sapphira was a warning that God will preserve the holiness of His temple, even if it means taking the lives of those whom He has saved (1 Cor. 11:30–32; 1 John 5:16). God will not let His name be mocked by saints who sacrifice His reputation for their pleasure.

Conclusion

Although the Spirit is poured out on all who repent when they hear the gospel, believers are not always filled with the Spirit. Believers have to choose to submit themselves to God’s will and be filled with His Spirit (Eph. 5:17–21). Even though Luke’s description of the believers reveals a remarkable unity as the church was led by God’s Spirit, the believers had not yet been perfected and could still choose to disobey God. Luke’s description of Ananias and Sapphira’s lying to the Spirit is a sobering reminder to the most obedient Christian that they must daily submit themselves to the Father’s will. The appearance of obedience is no substitute for truly being filled with the Spirit. God will not tolerate hypocrisy for long.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”
—Psalm 78:1

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Who was going to the temple in today’s lesson?

Peter and John

Who did Peter and John meet as they were going through the gate called Beautiful?

There was a man who could not walk. He asked Peter and John for money.

What did Peter tell him?

He said that they had no money but what he did have he would give to him.

What was it that Peter gave to the man?

Peter said in Jesus’ name for the man to stand, and his legs became strong and he stood.

What did Peter say to the crowd?

He told the people about Jesus’ life and death and that it was by Jesus that this man became well.

What did the religious leaders do?

They arrested Peter and John then questioned them the next day.

About how many people believed after Peter spoke.
5,000 men



Difficult Concepts

Filled with the Spirit: When God grants a person understanding to the gospel and then leads them in repentance, that person receives or is baptized in the Spirit. This is a one time unrepeatable act occurring at the moment of salvation. Being filled with the Spirit however is an experience and should be continuous. Believers are commanded in the Scriptures to be continuously filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). This being filled with the Holy Spirit means that he or she is being completely controlled or influenced by the Holy Spirit. When we are commanded then to be filled with the Spirit, it means that we are to yield and allow Him to work in our lives. We do that by surrendering our wills, our minds, our bodies, our time, our talents, our treasures—every single area—to the control of the Holy Spirit. If one does this, it will show, because Spirit-filled persons bear the fruit of righteousness in their lives.

Hypocrisy: One thing hell will be full of is hypocrites (Matt 24:51). These individuals put on a false appearance of spirituality. They desire to be seen as honoring the Lord or being righteous, meanwhile the motives of their heart are selfish and wicked. In today's lesson, Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of such hypocrisy. They desired to be seen selling their possessions so that they could receive praise from men. Yet their deceitfulness in keeping some of the earnings proved that they were acting wickedly, not righteously.

Offering: The early church sold their possessions and presented the earnings to the apostles as an offering. Many like Barnabas would come and lay the money at the apostles' feet, demonstrating that the money was a gift to be used at the apostles' discretion. The apostles would then use this offering or gift to care for those in need.



5

Unity of the Spirit

One concept students have a hard time understanding is the unity of spirit found in the early church. To aid their understanding of this, talk to the students about sports; asking them what is the same about all the people on a team. Point out how all the people on a team each have the same goal. Each teammate desires the same thing, whether it be to score a goal or keep the other team from scoring. If they do not have the same goal then they will not be able to compete or function very well as a team. Much of the early church was unified much like a team would be in any sporting event. Because of the Spirit's working in their hearts, everyone of the church desired to honor the Lord by caring for those in need and loving each other.



5

Skit: For the Praise of Men

Many hypocrites say things so that they will be liked by other people although they do not truly live out what they say. Create a skit where a group of students are sitting in church and the offering plate goes by. As the plate goes by the student only puts in one dollar. This should be obvious to the audience but not to the other students in the pews. After church the students come together to talk. They discuss the special project that the money is going to from today's tithe. The student who only put in one dollar says that he put in ten dollars to impress the other students, which was not true.



Punishable by Death

Ananias and Sapphira were not the first people in the Bible who were killed by God for their actions. Discuss with the students some of the people in the Old Testament who did not follow the Lord's instructions and were killed because of it. Some examples may be Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), Achan (Josh. 7), Uzza (1 Chron. 13), Korah (Num. 16), etc.



They Had All Things In Common

Use this snack time idea to teach the students the concept of what it was like to live in the time of the early church. Give separate students different parts of the snack such as one a bottle of juice, another a bag of crackers, another cups and plates, etc. Explain how the different people in today's lesson all came together and shared what they had so that no one was in need.



Carrying Out the Bodies

After Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit they died and were carried out. Use this game to prepare the students for today's lesson. Split the students into two groups. Create an obstacle course that the students will have to maneuver through. The object of this relay is for the students to carry their object (such as a beanbag or basketball) on a towel between students through the obstacle course. Once they arrive back to their group they are to pass off the towel to the next set of students and sit down. The first team seated wins.



Creating Coins

Create coins with the students before class to be used during the lesson. Begin with cardboard or cardstock by cutting out coin shaped circles. Next, have the students cover these coins using gold or silver aluminum foil.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

The Holy Spirit had worked through the apostles and brought many people to salvation. The church was growing; the last time they counted there were five thousand men who had been saved since Pentecost. The Spirit was not only working in the apostles, but in the members as well.

The Bible describes the first church as full of people who were serving the Lord in different ways. They got along together very well because they were more concerned about their love for the Lord they shared than they were about the ways they were different. Their goal was to give God glory instead of looking for ways

to glorify themselves. They also took care of each other. If one person was hungry but didn't have money to buy food, another person shared his own food or money. They didn't care about who had the most things or the most money, rather they cared about making sure that everyone had what they needed. Some of them even sold land or houses that they owned and gave the money to the apostles. The apostles would then determine who needed that money and would give it out. Everything was going very well in the church. God was being honored because of their actions.

However, the people in the church were not perfect; they were still sinners. The Bible tells us about a time when two people sinned against God and the church, and how God punished them for it. Their names were Ananias and his wife Sapphira. They decided to sell some land that they owned and give the money to the church, but they did not want to give all the money to the church. They wanted to keep some of it for themselves, but make everyone think that they had given all of it so people would think that they were more generous than they were. They were giving money to the church to bring glory to themselves, rather than to God.

Ananias brought the money to the apostles. But the Holy Spirit knew what was in his heart. Ananias was lying and the Holy Spirit let Peter know this. Peter said to him, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ...Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). Immediately after hearing Peter's words, Ananias fell down and died. God punished Ananias for lying to Him.

When his wife Sapphira came three hours later, she had not yet heard what had happened to her husband. Peter asked her if her husband had given everything they had earned from selling the land. She lied and said that he had. Peter rebuked her and told her she would die for her sin, just as her husband had. She fell down immediately and died.

God's purpose in punishing them so severely was so that people would fear His holiness. It was a warning that those who don't respect the holiness of God. They will be punished, even those who are saved. Even though the church was growing and people were serving the Lord and each other and the Holy Spirit was being poured out on them, they still had to choose every day whether they would submit to God's will and glorify Him or allow sin to rule their hearts. God made it clear that only appearing to be obedient was not acceptable, but rather one must desire to glorify God in his heart also.



Lesson Questions

In today's lesson, what would someone do for another person if they were in need?

Those who had things would give to those who were in need.

What did Joses do with his land?

Joses sold his land and gave the money to the apostles.

What did Ananias and Sapphira do with their possession?

They sold it and decided together that they would only give part of the money.

Why did they do this?

They wanted some of the money for themselves but wanted to look like they were doing the right thing before the apostles and those in the church.

What happened when Ananias came in with the money?
He gave the money to the apostles and Peter asked him why he had lied to the Holy Spirit. Then Ananias fell over dead. Then Ananias was carried off and buried.

What happened when Sapphira came to Peter?
Peter asked her if she had paid a specific amount for the land and why she was testing the Lord. Then she fell down dead.

What did the people think who saw this and heard about it?
They were really afraid.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Illustrations of Hypocrisy

The following objects can illustrate some form of hypocrisy. This allows you to show the class the concept of hypocrisy in a variety of ways and in different contexts.

Bring a wad of cash that includes both large and small bills alike. Illustrate to the students how one might put the large bills on the outside of the wad of money to give the appearance of being wealthy.

Make a jar of jelly beans that has cotton stuffed into to its center. (The majority of the substance in the jar should be cotton with the outside edges being jellybeans.) The jar should give the appearance of being full of jellybeans. After asking several students to guess the number of jellybeans, reveal to the students the real substance of the jar. The class will feel deceived as they realize the jar only had the appearance of being full of jellybeans.

Give a couple of pennies to each student. Then take up an offering, passing around an offering plate for them to give their pennies unto the Lord. Illustrate to the students how one might drop their pennies into the plate real loud. After asking them why one might draw attention to themselves, explain to themselves the danger of wanting to receive praise in the eyes of man. This would be a great time to bring out the consequence of Ananias and Sapphira's hypocrisy and desire to receive the praise of man.



Act It Out

To make this lesson come alive in the minds of the students have a teacher dress up as Barnabas teach this lesson. Have another teacher introduce him and where he came from. Barnabas should give his testimony discussing the sin that he saw and how God demonstrated that Ananias and Sapphira's actions were wrong.



Coin Visuals

While teaching the lesson use the gold or silver coins to illustrate how Ananias and Sapphira may have kept back some of the money that they received in the sale of their property.

Praise and Worship

There Is a Redeemer

I Will Sing of the Mercies

Come Let Us Worship and Bow Down

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



"Two Examples"

Materials: copies of "Two Examples" craft page, scissors, craft sticks, crayons

Directions: Give each child a copy of the "Two Examples" craft page. Have them cut out Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira. Then have them color and decorate the images and glue them onto craft sticks. Ask the students questions from the story to see if they can identify the right person by holding up their pictures.

Sample questions: Who feared God? (B) Who lied to God? (A&S) Who sold property? (B and A&S) Who gave all their money? (B) Who went before the apostles? (B and A&S)



"The Ananias and Sapphira Cycle"

Materials: copies of "The Ananias and Sapphira Cycle" craft page, scissors, brads, crayons

Directions: Give each child a craft page copied onto cardstock. Have the students color the circle and strips at the bottom of the page. Next, cut off the strip at the bottom and cut out the two "hands" for the cycle above. Punch holes (with pencil) in center of circles and at points on the "hands" and attach like clock hands with the brad. Talk about how first Ananias did each thing around the cycle, then how Sapphira did them, too. Read Acts 5:1–11.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

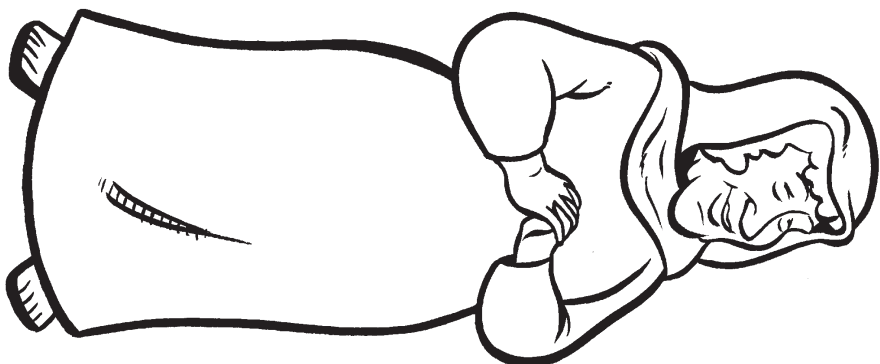
"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul;"

—Acts 4:32a

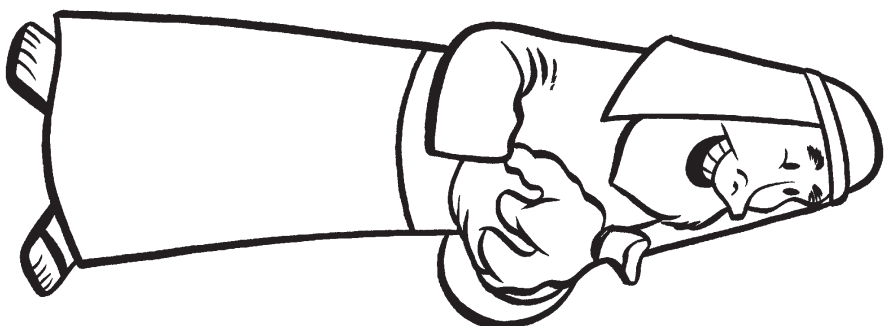
Two Examples



Ananias

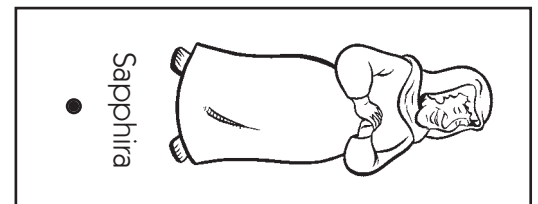
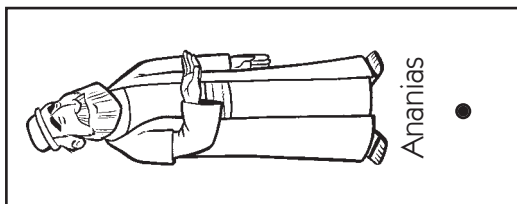
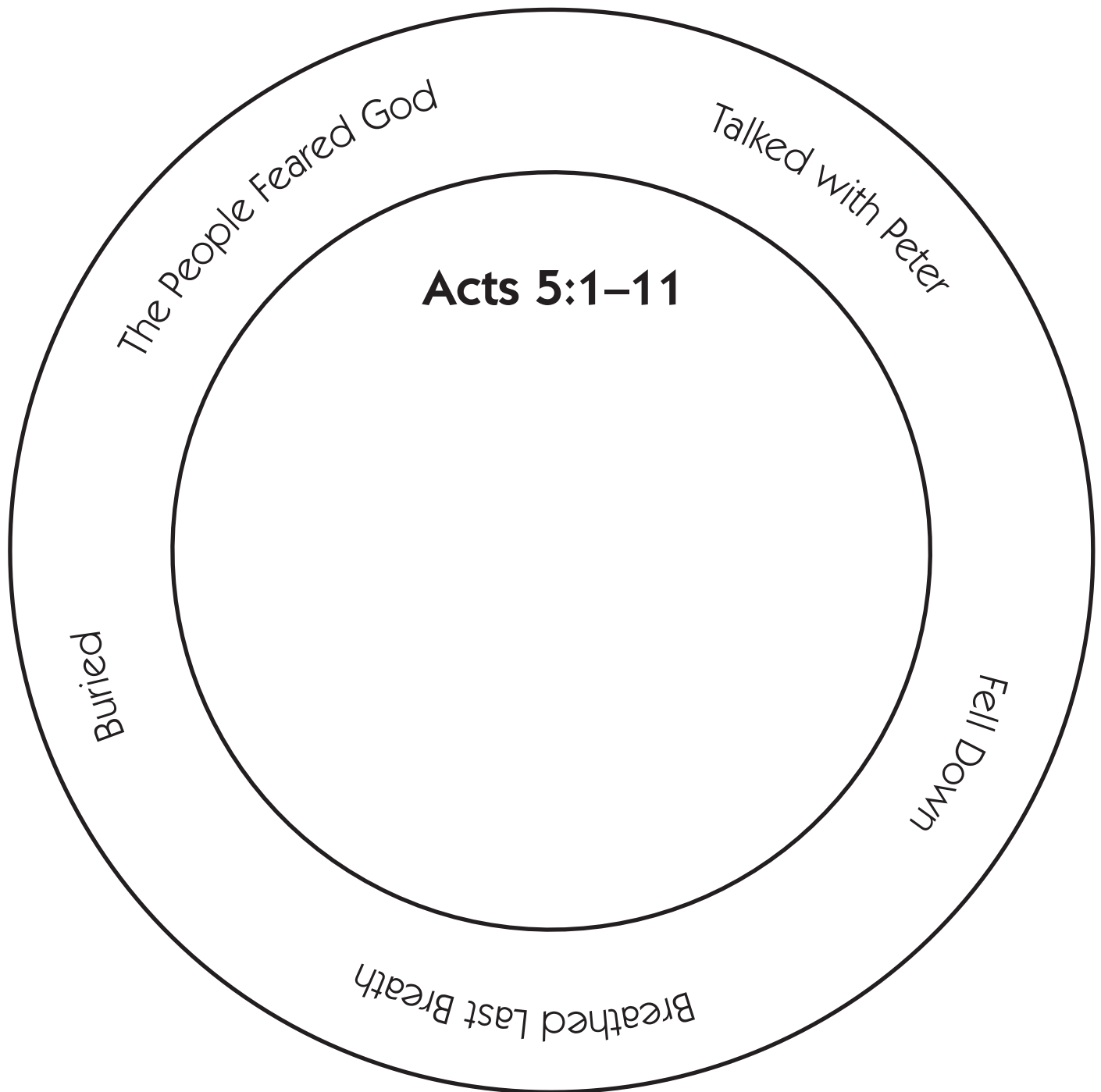


Sapphira



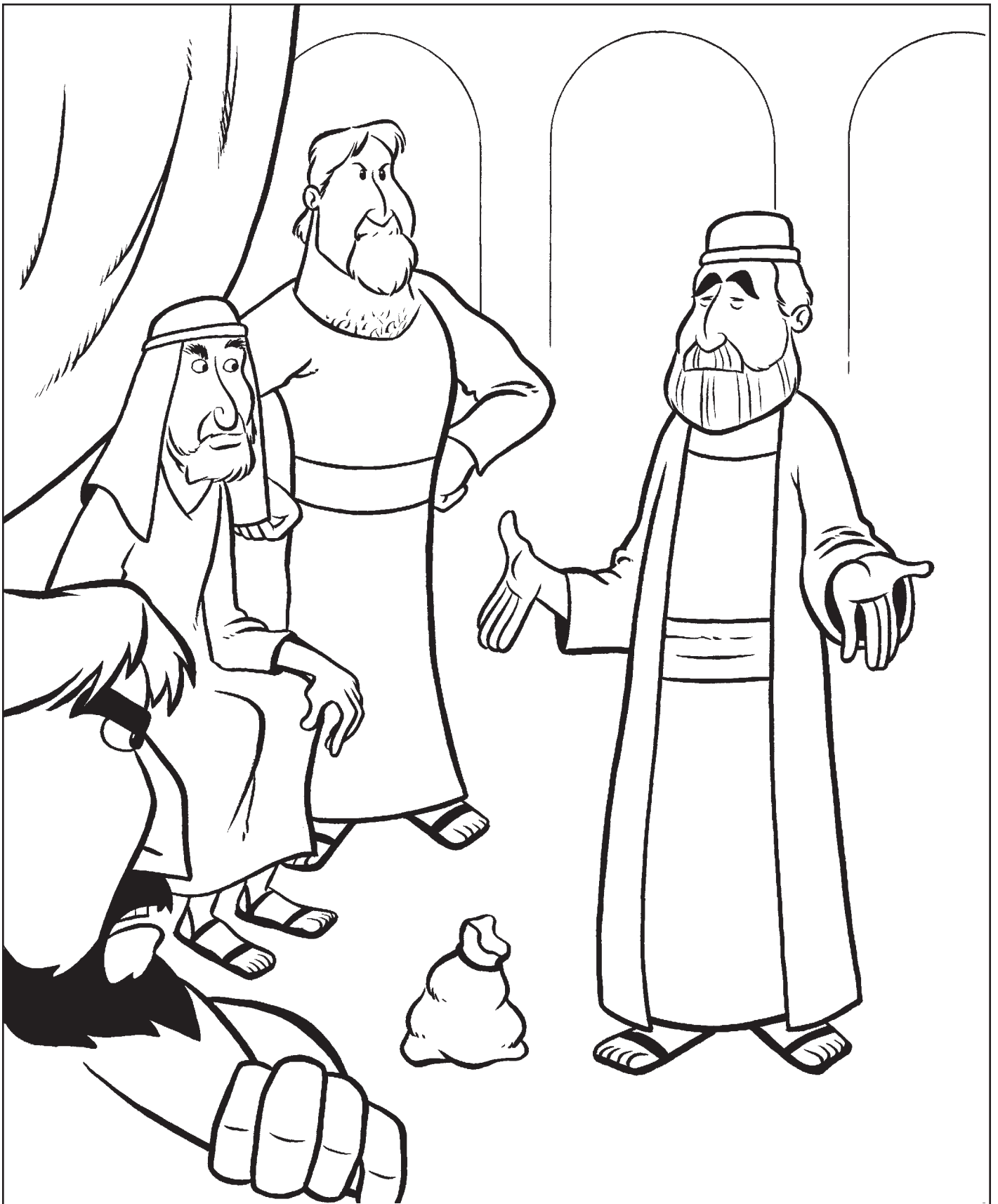
Barnabas

The Ananias and Sapphira Cycle





“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” —Acts 4:32



“And [Ananias] kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain portion and laid it at the apostles feet. But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?’” —Acts 5:2

