



# Message Guide

FOR JULY 6, 2025

## THE STORY UNLEASHED- 3: UNLEASHED THROUGH A HEART OF WORSHIP ACTS 4:32-5:1-11



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Acts 4:32 starts us out with this incredible picture of the church:

*All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*

An example if this is found in verses 32-37. Joseph, nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles. **(Acts 4:32-37 NLT)**.

### 1. Have you ever been part of a community—big or small—that was so generous or unified it left a lasting impression on you? What made it different?

People that have things that they don't need are selling those things and bringing it to the church leaders so that they can give to those who have needs. It's really great that chapter 4 ends there for people who are reading through their Bible and pause there. But Acts doesn't give us a feel-good ending in this story. Chapter 5 starts with a Greek word that is a connector. We translate it "Now or But". What's significant about this is that it tells us that the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 are connected and this next story is going to bring some sharp contrast.

*But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. **(Acts 5:1-2 NLT)***



# Message Guide

FOR JULY 6, 2025

So, to be clear here, Ananias (whose name ironically means “God is gracious”) has brought some money to the apostles claiming that it is all the money that he received for selling some land. His wife, Sapphira, is not just aware of this plan, but it fully on board. The plan presumably is made so that they can look better in the eyes of the community while still getting some spending money on the side.

## 2. In what ways can seeking approval or status in front of others cause us to compromise honesty or authenticity in our spiritual lives?

*Continuing with the story...*

*Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!” (Acts 5:2-4)*

Now imagine being called out like this. We’ve all had times where we’ve been caught, even if it’s much less dramatic. But Peter accuses Annanias of lying to the Holy Spirit. You may be wondering, how does one lie to the Holy Spirit exactly?

We need to acknowledge that the church is a Holy Spirit filled community and that means that individuals are filled with the Holy Spirit in that community. By trying to pass off his good deed as something better than it was, he was not only compromising his own integrity, but the integrity of the community. So at least in this case, lying to the Holy Spirit seems to be a lie that affects integrity and therefore unity of the church.

So, what happens to this guy that lies to the Holy Spirit? *As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. (Acts 5:5a NLT)*



# Message Guide

FOR JULY 6, 2025

There is irony that seeking for a higher status caused Ananias to fall figuratively and literally. The kingdom of God is not meant to be a group of people that are seeking status.

And following this event we see the outcome...

*Everyone who heard about it was terrified. Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" (Acts 5:5b-8a NLT)*

An important point here worth noting that Sapphira isn't condemned as guilty just because her husband made a choice. She may have been on board with the decision, but she hadn't told the lie herself. She is given the exact same chance that Ananias had. That being said, she still chooses deceit...

*"Yes," she replied, "that was the price."*

*And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened. (Acts 5:8b-11 NLT)*

Does this feel harsh to anyone else? Do stories like this make you wonder if God is just waiting for a chance to strike you dead? Or at the very least he's up there counting the number of things you do wrong.

## 3. Why do you think God responded so seriously to the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira?

Digging Deeper: Instead of avoiding difficult passages, we can lean into God's word to help us learn more about God's character.



# Message Guide

FOR JULY 6, 2025

There is another story in the Bible where someone held back possessions that were supposed to be God's. It is recorded in Joshua 6 and 7. A man named Achan held back some of the belongings that were supposed to be God's, and he also received death.

Is the point then that God wants to punish us when we hold back our stuff from Him? Logically, that doesn't make a lot of sense. How could the God who created the universe be so obsessed with stuff when He created it in the first place? The issue is not the stuff, it's what holding back stuff represents.

God doesn't want your stuff. God wants your heart.

While God doesn't need your possessions, we have to recognize that money and possessions are things that can easily get in the way.

Matthew 6:19-21 says, *"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."*

**(Matthew 6:19-21 NLT)**

God doesn't want your stuff. God wants your heart.

Application:

The end of Acts chapter 4 clearly outlines a community that is unleashed by a lifestyle and heart of worship. Worship is not just singing songs in a church service. Worship is our response to what God has done for us. We can therefore choose to live a lifestyle with different hearts and make choices that reflect this reality.

Chapter 5 shows us the contrast of what happens when hearts approach that lifestyle in the wrong way. Ananias and Sapphira decided to try to make themselves look better in the eyes of their community by misrepresenting the facts and holding something back. This might be more relatable for us today.



# Message Guide

FOR JULY 6, 2025

What are things people commonly lie about to make themselves look better? Things like:

- Achievements and Success
- Skills and Knowledge
- Appearance and Lifestyle
- Relationships and Social Circles
- Personality Traits
- Moral and Ethical Behavior
- Habits and Lifestyle Choices

Maybe there's a part of your life that you've been holding back. Maybe you have worked really hard to ensure that others only see the best in you and it has left you trapped. Now you're stuck between the person that people think you are and the person that you know you are. I want you to hear this clearly today, God loves you and we want to walk with you.

In order for us to be unleashed individually and as a community, we must decide to give God our hearts in the way He deserves.

God doesn't want your stuff. God wants your heart.

**4. Ask yourself: What part of my life or heart am I holding back from God—and what might He be calling me to surrender so I can live a life of true worship?**