

A Community Where You Belong | Acts 5 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To allow the gospel to shape how we approach community.

Icebreaker: When was the loneliest stretch of your life?

Transition:

After the resurrection of Jesus, the community of Christians grew to over 5,000 people. God worked miraculous signs through the apostles to confirm the truthfulness of what they were saying about Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah. It was an exciting time of numerical growth, but also of transformed lives. But, just as there was external opposition to this movement of Christians, there was also internal opposition.

Discussion

Read:

[Acts 4:32-5:10](#)

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

¹ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was

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sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

Dave made several points about the death of Ananias and Sapphira in his sermon:

- *Acts is an echo of how God worked in the exodus when Israel was being established with great miracles of deliverance and extraordinary physical deaths as warnings. In Acts, the church is being established.*
- *The extraordinary deaths helped teach people what God hates and bred a healthy fear of a holy God.*
- *God doesn't always work through extraordinary deaths, but it was important for the early founding of the church.*
- *The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was NOT that they didn't give all they had, but they lied by acting like they had.*

1. How does hypocrisy & performative righteousness impede the church?

2. Where do you see or feel the temptation to pretend at church?

Optional Dig Deeper Question: Have you had a negative experience with hypocrisy at a church?

3. If God hates hypocrisy so much, how can our small group fight against it?

Read:

[Acts 5:11-14](#)

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¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. ¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

4. Luke makes a tie between "believing in the Lord" and being "added to their number" or joined to the church. What do you think about that connection between Jesus and his church?
5. How is it good that Jesus is gracious towards this messy community struggling with hypocrisy?
6. Dave mentioned how our culture is struggling with a loneliness epidemic. How can we, as God's people, better meet the need?

Sharing and Prayer:

We have lots we could pray through from this sermon and this discussion. Perhaps God has brought to mind:

- A way that you have been hiding or pretending
- A way you hope our small group or our church can heal our hypocrisy
- A desire for a particular part of our community or person experiencing loneliness to find the community that comes in Christ and with his people
- Someone who has left the church or Christianity due to the hypocrisy of the church that you hope comes back

Have an open time allowing people to pray for whatever God has brought to mind.