

Ananias and Sapphira



Scripture Reference: [Acts 4:32 through 5:11](#)

Suggested Theme: God speaks the truth. Speak the truth and do not lie.

Memory Verse: “Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before.”
[Colossians 3:9](#)

Story Overview:

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, conspired to lie to the church about a property they sold. They said they generously donated the entire profit but secretly kept a portion for themselves. Peter confronted Ananias in front of the church and told him that he had lied to the Holy Spirit by doing this. Ananias fell dead. Unaware of what had happened to her husband, Sapphira came before the church and lied again about the money. She, too, fell dead. A newfound awe and reverence for God swept through the church.

Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

The event of Ananias and Sapphira is set against the backdrop of life in the early church. The church was fervent and growing rapidly every day. Passages such as [Acts 2:44-47](#) and [Acts 4:32-37](#) describe the unity of the early church and of selling their possessions and sharing with those in need. Joseph, for example, was a Christian who was held in esteem because he sold a field and gave the proceeds to the church. In the minds and hearts of these early Christians, everything they owned was to be shared and laid at the Apostle’s feet for distribution to others.

During His ministry, Jesus discouraged His followers from placing too much value on material possessions in this world. Material possessions would not last. This proved true through persecution and being called by God. Through words and examples, Jesus also taught the importance of caring for those in need. As time went by, the church would face many troubles. With these teachings in mind, it is unsurprising that the early church radically embraced these ideals in selling their property and sharing their profits. In the future, this practice would prove necessary for the church’s survival when persecution would begin, and Christians would lose employment and income.

Understanding this backdrop is vital to grasping the gravity of Ananias and Sapphira’s sin and the harshness of their punishment. Ananias and Sapphira were not required to give the church all their profits. Still, by doing so, they would gain others’ respect. The real sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not in withholding money but in lying about it.

When Peter confronted them, he put the lie into its broader context. The offence was not simply against the people, the church or even the Apostles. This was a lie against the Holy Spirit. The fact that they thought

they could fool the Spirit reveals their disdain for the Spirit and its power. It was for their dishonesty that Ananias and Sapphira were punished.

It is important to understand why the punishment for Ananias and Sapphira was as harsh as it was. As modern-day Christians, we struggle with this idea of God smiting them in an atmosphere of the New Covenant and Grace. It helps to recognise the church at this stage as being in its infancy and most certainly exposed to Satan's attacks. Satan will attack God's church from both without and within. The incident of Ananias and Sapphira was the first noted internal spiritual attack in church history. God needed to protect the purity, integrity and witness of the church. Should that lie have been overlooked or allowed to stand as it was, it would have allowed for further dishonesty, corruption and hypocrisy and thus could have destroyed the fledgling church. Ananias and Sapphira were killed as an example and an act of protection. God's ability and capacity to forgive are revealed in other contexts, but the example of Ananias and Sapphira makes it clear that God cannot be fooled or lied to.

Explaining why God takes dishonesty so seriously could be useful when teaching this story with the background in mind. Dishonesty can destroy marriages, families, churches, relationships and our witnesses. It hurts us. It hurts others. It hurts God. When we are honest, things can be improved, even when we make mistakes.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Share a personal story about when you or someone you know told a lie that led to more lies or negative consequences. Take care to be age-appropriate. "Children, today we are going to learn about a time when two people told a lie."

The Story:

We can learn important lessons from the Bible. The book of Acts records a very serious lesson that the earliest Christians learned about telling lies.

The church in Jerusalem grew bigger and bigger every day. People heard about Jesus and then told other people. Soon, hundreds and hundreds and even thousands of people decided to follow King Jesus and were baptised.

There were many different kinds of people in the church. Some were poor, and some were rich. But everyone shared what they had so that no one would be hungry or would not have a place to live. One man named Joseph owned a field and had a good idea. He sold the field and took all the money he earned to the Apostles. The Apostles shared the money with those who needed it. Everyone was happy to share what they had.

Everyone, that is, except a man, Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira. They wanted people to think they were generous like Joseph, but in their hearts, they didn't want to share as much as Joseph did. So people thought Ananias and Sapphira were sharing, but God knew what they were thinking. Ananias and Sapphira owned some property just like Joseph did. They decided to sell it and give the money to the Apostles, as Joseph had done. The Apostles could share the money with those in need, and everyone would see how generous they were. But Ananias and Sapphira didn't want to give ALL the money to the Apostles. They tried to keep some to themselves.

So, Ananias made a plan. They would tell everyone they were giving ALL the money to the Apostles, but they would secretly keep some back for themselves. They thought they could tell this lie and no one would ever find out. So, Ananias hid some of the money and took the rest to the Apostles. He told them, "My wife and I sold our property and here is all the money. You can give to people who need it."

The Apostles were wise men who learned the lie with God's help. The Apostle Peter said, "Ananias, you could have kept that money, and no one would have thought you were bad. But you didn't just keep the money. You decided to lie about it in front of all these people.

But you haven't just lied to all these people. You have lied to God. You have lied to the Holy Spirit."

Everyone was shocked to see Ananias fall and die right after Peter said this. This was very serious!

About three hours later, Sapphira came to the same place. No one had told her about Ananias, so she did not know what had happened earlier.

Peter asked Sapphira, "Your husband gave us the money from the property you both sold. He said that this is all the money. Is that the truth? Is this all the money?" Sapphira thought everyone believed the lie, so she said, "Yes, the amount Ananias said is correct. It is all the money."

Peter said, "Sapphira, you have lied to God and to the Holy Spirit just like your husband did. It is a very serious thing to lie to God!"

And everyone was shocked again when Sapphira fell and died just like her husband did. Sapphira was taken out and buried by her husband.

The news spread to everyone. The Christians had learned an important lesson. They knew that lying was very serious to God and that they should always tell the truth.

Jesus is the truth, and we can believe everything He says. We can believe the words of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Can people believe what you say is the truth?

Have you ever told a lie? It is very serious. But God tells us we can ask Him to forgive us and start telling the truth. Let's read what the Bible says:

Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before. Colossians 3:9 (ICB)

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- Who were the husband and wife in the Book of Acts who lied about their money? (Ananias and Sapphira)
- Who asked Ananias and Sapphira about the money they had given to the church? (The apostle Peter)
- What happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the whole church and to the Holy Spirit? (They fell dead)
- What might the other Christians in this community have learned from this event?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about God's power?

Reflection:

- Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira wanted to sell their property and give the money to the church? Why do you think they lied?
- How would you feel if you had seen Ananias or Sapphira fall and die in front of you?
- What surprised you when you listened to this story?
- Peter asked Sapphira if she and Ananias had really given all the money they made to the church. Why do you think Sapphira lied?
- What does it mean that Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit?
- Does this story change how you think about lying?
- Why does God value honesty? Why is it important to be honest and speak the truth to people?
- Do you trust Jesus and His words? Why or why not? What about God the Father or the Holy Spirit?
- Sometimes the people we know and are friends with encourage us to lie, just like how Ananias decided to lie, and Sapphira agreed to lie, too. What should we do when someone encourages us to lie?
- Is there ever a time when it is okay to lie?
- What question would you ask God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Oh, Be Careful Song](#)
- [ABC: Jesus Died for You and Me Song](#)
- [J-E-S-U-S Song](#)
- [New Testament Songs](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Guide the children in looking up “lie” in a dictionary and a thesaurus. Write down and discuss your findings.
- Discuss situations where lying is a temptation.
- Role-play today’s story.
- Have the children draw a cartoon strip depicting the story.
- To set the scene for the story, use fake money and game pieces to “buy and sell property.” The hotels and houses from Monopoly work well as you make transactions, and you can talk about how Joseph sold his property and gave the money to the Apostles to share with the church. Then act out the transaction in which Ananias and Sapphira hid some of their proceeds, gave only part to the Apostles, and lied about it. Because the children turn the “property” over and count out the money, they understand the lie more clearly.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Collect coins from various countries and allow the children to examine them and notice the differences. Children place a few coins under a paper and then rub a pencil or crayon over the coins so that the details of the coins show through the paper.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)

- [Craft, Application Activity: Really good application to teach about what happens when we lie. Uses icecream and salt. \(Over the big moon\)](#)
- [Questions, craft and discussion starters \(Sunday school sources\)](#)
- [Video: The Grim Tale of Ananias and Sapphira by Dan Stevers](#)

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