



ENOGERA BAPTIST CHURCH
Jesus changes lives

ACTS



Acts #7 – 4:32-5:11

Acts 5:11 – And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

NOTE FOR LEADERS

This document is intended to be used as a discussion *guide*, rather than a curriculum. As small group leaders, please feel free to lead through the topic as most appropriate for your group.

HOUSEKEEPING

Things going at the moment:

- **Tri Church Summit Dates:** 25th –27th May. Registration and Payment now due!
- **LIFEBEATS: Katisha's Fundraiser Concert:**
 - Saturday 12th May @ 7pm at Enoggera Baptist Church.
 - Entry by donation, all proceeds to Refugee Connect



#7 ACTS 4:32-5:11

REFLECT

This is a time to generate some discussion by reflecting on the ideas in this week's message. Some ideas include:

- Ask the group to debrief for those who have missed the sermons on Sunday
- What stood out? Do you have any questions?
- Were there any special moments of clarity where God spoke to you clearly?

DIG INTO THE WORD

Let's dig a little deeper. Use the biblical text to discover what God reveals to us in his Word.

In this passage we see the church continue in vibrant community and sacrificial generosity toward one another. But all is not perfect in the church: and in chapter 5 we read of the first recorded sin in the early New Testament church and God's swift and decisive response.

Acts 4:32-5:11 *They Had Everything in Common*

³²Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Ananias and Sapphira

***5** But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ²and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." ⁵When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.*



⁷After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Hebrews 12:28-29 *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.*

1 John 1:5-9 Walking in the Light

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scriptures apply directly to their lives. Get group members to talk about the real life implications of the study.

1. **DISCUSS:** How are we to apply these things? Are there any immediate implications?
2. **STUDY:** Read 4:32-5:1
 - a. A number of important characteristics are found in this text of the first Christian community. What are they? [Note the two 'great' things mentioned in verse 33!]
 - b. How were the believers caring for one another?
3. **APPLY:** How might we grow as a church in our sacrificial generosity and unity as a community of believers? How might you play a part in this?
4. **STUDY:** Read 5:1-5:11
 - a. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?
 - b. Does God's response seem unfairly harsh? Why or why not?
5. **DISCUSS:** What is the fear of God? How would you explain the relationship between seeing God as our loving Father and this idea of a healthy fear of Him? [**Leaders Notes:** *I defined the fear of God as an awe-filled reverence before Him – drawing on Hebrews 12:28-29. See quotes from John Piper and C.S. Lewis in the notes section to help illustrate this relationship.*]
6. **APPLY:** How might we grow in our awe-filled reverence of God?



7. **DISCUSS:** How would you define hypocrisy?
8. **APPLY:** How might we do battle against the lure of hypocrisy in our hearts and lives before God and one another? Practice confession!

PRAY

Thank God for the work and power of the Holy Spirit and pray that we would understand Him more deeply and rely on Him more fully.

Pray for grace to grow in a healthy fear of the Lord while remaining confident in his grace towards you.

HELPFUL NOTES

QUOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

1 - Imagine watching an end of days type storm roll in over the plains while exploring an Arctic glacier...

“At first there was the fear that this terrible storm and awesome terrain might claim your life. But then you found a refuge and gained the hope that you would be safe. But not everything in the feeling called fear vanished from your heart. Only the life-threatening part. There remained the trembling, the awe, the wonder, the feeling that you would never want to tangle with such a storm or be the adversary of such power. . . . The fear of God is what is left of the storm when you have a safe place to watch right in the middle of it. . . . Oh, the thrill of being here in the centre of the awful power of God, yet protected by God himself!

~ John Piper

2 - In The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, Mr Beaver explains to the kids that the coming king, Aslan, is a fully grown lion...

“Who said anything about being safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

~ Mr Beaver (C.S. Lewis)

NOTES ON KEY TEXTS

Acts 2:14–5:42 The Witness in Jerusalem. Beginning with Peter’s sermon at Pentecost and continuing through ch. 5, the witness of the Christians is confined to the city of Jerusalem and restricted to Jews.

Acts 4:32–5:16 The Community Shares Together. The second extensive “summary” in Acts deals with the practice of fellow believers sharing goods (see 2:43–44). Luke describes their practice and holds



forth Barnabas as a model (4:32–37), followed by the account of the abuse of the practice by Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11). A final summary highlights the growth of the community and its experience with the Spirit’s power (5:12–16).

Acts 4:34 The believers’ sharing exemplified the OT ideal of there not being a needy person among them—that is, there should be no poor in the community of faith (cf. Deut. 15:4–11). To realize this ideal the Christians would sell some of their goods and bring the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to the needy. Neither their sharing nor their bringing offerings should be seen as any sort of communal ownership such as was practiced by the Essenes and by later Christian monks, for the practice was strictly voluntary (see Acts 5:4). Such sacrifice and giving is seen as exemplary.

Acts 4:36 Barnabas would not have been cited as an example of sharing if the practice had not been voluntary. Barnabas is introduced in the Acts narrative at this point; he is a major character in later chapters, particularly as Paul’s companion on his first mission. That mission began on Cyprus (13:4b–6), the home of Barnabas. The nickname son of encouragement fits his personality well. He introduced the newly converted Paul to the apostolic circle when everyone else was suspicious of him (9:27). He brought Paul to Antioch to participate in the outreach to the Gentiles (11:25–26). And he stood up for the young John Mark when Paul did not want to take him with them (15:36–39).

Acts 5:1–11 The positive picture of the community’s sharing is marred by the account of a couple who abused the practice by holding back a portion of a gift while claiming to be giving it totally to the church. The context is important to note: the incident is bracketed by references to the Spirit’s power (4:31, 33; 5:12–16). The Spirit was closely linked to the unity of the fellowship manifested in their sharing. Ananias and Sapphira abused the fellowship through their deception and thereby threatened its unity.

Acts 5:2 The couple kept back ... some of the proceeds. “Kept back” (Gk. *nosphizō*) means “to put aside for oneself, to keep back” in a secret and dishonest way. It is an uncommon word, which was used also in the Septuagint in the story of Achan (Josh. 7:1), who received a sentence of death for holding back some of the spoils from Jericho that were dedicated to God.

Acts 5:3 Satan was the instigator behind the couple’s deed, “filling” their hearts just as the Spirit had “filled” the community for witness (4:31). Twice Ananias was charged with keeping part of the income from the land (5:2, 3), indicating that he must have claimed that he was dedicating the whole to the Lord’s work. His sin was the lie, claiming to be doing more than he did.

Acts 5:4 Peter made clear the voluntary nature of the church’s charity: Ananias did not have to give anything. Note that whereas Peter accused Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit in v. 3, here he says that he has lied ... to God, showing that the Holy Spirit is a person and that he is himself divine. Lying is characteristic of Satan (see John 8:44) and exactly opposite the character of God, who cannot lie (cf. Num. 23:19; Prov. 30:5; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

Acts 5:5 great fear (Gk. *phobos*). Fear in response to a manifestation of God’s presence involves both reverent awe and a healthy fear of God’s displeasure and discipline.



Acts 5:8 When Peter asked Sapphira whether she sold the land for so much, she repeated the lie, stating the partial amount the couple had given.

Acts 5:9 Peter accused Sapphira of testing the Spirit (cf. Ex. 17:2; Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12), an expression that echoes OT passages about testing the Lord. This is another indication of the Spirit's deity.

Acts 5:10 Peter informed Sapphira of her impending death before it happened; the note of divine judgment is unmistakable. The text does not give enough information to know if Ananias and Sapphira were "false" believers or if they truly belonged to the Lord despite their egregious sin. One could view the event as God's removal from the young Christian community of the distrust and disunity provoked by the couple's dishonesty. It was a time when the Spirit was especially present in the community, blessing it with unity of fellowship (4:32) and the power of miracles (5:12–16). That same power brought judgment to those who by their actions denied this unity and power. Satan (v. 3) was no match for the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 8:1 No condemnation echoes the conclusion stated in 5:1 ("Therefore ... we have peace with God") and underscores the stunning implications of the gospel first introduced in 1:16–17. As Paul immediately goes on to explain, there is "no condemnation" for the Christian because God has condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son (8:3) to pay the penalty for sin through his death on the cross.

Heb. 12:28–29 Gratitude and worship are due in light of salvation. Acceptable worship takes into account (in reverence and awe) God's holiness and his position as a judge to whom alone worship is due (see the context of Deut. 4:24, quoted here). Some say that this "acceptable worship" is depicted in the conduct described in Heb. 13:1–19 (cf. Rom. 12:1–2).

1 John 1:5–10 God's Nature and Human Sin. "God is light" (v. 5) reflects an OT background where "light" symbolizes both knowledge and purity. All of John's writing flows from the reality of God in his spiritual perfection, moral excellence, and utter transcendence—his light (see 1 Tim. 6:16). This will contrast sharply with errant humans protesting their innocence (1 John 1:6, 8, 10).

1 John 1:6 If we say. John may be paraphrasing what some were falsely claiming. If God is light (v. 5), then those who walk in darkness are not walking with God, no matter what they say.

1 John 1:7 Walk in the light means to reflect God's perfection (see v. 5) in the human sphere and includes both correct doctrine (truth) and moral purity (holiness). The symbolism of light as knowledge (see note on vv. 5–10) also implies that when Christians "walk in the light" their lives will be known, and will not contain hidden sins, falsehoods, or deception. Such walking "in the light" results in deep divine and human fellowship (see v. 3) and progressive cleansing from all sin.

1 John 1:8 have no sin. we deceive ourselves. The devil (3:8) or the world (2:15) may contribute to human straying, but in the end each individual bears responsibility for his or her own sin. Some sin remains in every Christian's life ("have," present tense), even that of the elderly apostle John ("we").



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1 John 1:9 Christians must confess (their) sins, initially to receive salvation and then to maintain fellowship with God and with one another (v. 3). faithful and just to forgive. God is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Num. 14:18). Yet John also makes it clear (1 John 3:6, 9) that persistent unrepented sin is not the mark of a Christian—God “will by no means clear the guilty” (Num. 14:18).

REFERENCE:

Developed with the help of the following:

- ESV Study Bible, Crossway.