

LEADER Bible Study

Something amazing was happening among believers in the early church. Not only was the Holy Spirit changing people's hearts to believe in Jesus, He was empowering them to live differently. We see the evidence of God's grace among the believers in Acts 4:32-35. The believers shared everything they had. If one person had a need, someone else gladly gave what he had to meet that need. As a result, "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34).

Joseph (also known as Barnabas) was one of the disciples living in this way. He sold a field and gave the money to the apostles. But trouble arose when Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sold some land. Perhaps they wanted to appear as generous as Barnabas without feeling the full cost of such generosity. They secretly kept back some of the money, and Ananias brought the rest to Peter.

When Peter confronted Ananias, he didn't tell him he was wrong to only bring part of the money. In fact, Peter said Ananias could have been honest about how the money was divided. Ananias and Sapphira's sin was in pretending to be generous when they were actually greedy. They had tried to deceive the apostles, but Peter pointed out that they were guilty of trying to deceive God. Ananias dropped dead, and a few hours later his wife did too.

As you teach this story to kids, avoid using Ananias and Sapphira as a warning to be generous or die. As sinners, we struggle with the temptation of greed. Point kids to Jesus, who forgives our greed and changes us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts to want to share with those in need because Jesus generously gave all He had so we can share in His riches and have forgiveness and eternal life.

The BIBLE Story

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 4–5

The early church was growing. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were telling people that Jesus had been raised from the dead. **A large group of believers met together in Jerusalem. They shared everything they had.** If someone had more than he needed, he gladly gave it away so everyone had what he needed.

One man, Barnabas, sold a field and gave the money to the apostles. The apostles used the money to help people in need. Everyone who had land or houses did the same. **Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sold some land and pretended to give all of the money to the apostles,** but they kept some of it for themselves.

When Ananias brought the money to the apostles, **Peter asked him, “Why are you lying to the Holy Spirit? You could have been honest about what you did with the money, but instead you lied—not to us, but to God.”** When Ananias heard this, he fell down, died, and was buried. Everyone who heard about this was filled with fear.

About three hours later, **Sapphira came to the apostles.** She did not know what had happened to her husband. **Peter asked her, “Is this all the money you got for the land?”**

“Yes,” she said. “That’s all of it.”

Peter said, “Why did you and your husband agree to test the Lord?” Then Sapphira fell dead too. Great fear came on everyone in the church and all who heard about these things.

Christ Connection: Ananias and Sapphira wanted to look generous, but they were greedy. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts to want to share with those in need because Jesus generously gave all He had so we can share in His riches and have forgiveness and eternal life.

Bible Storytelling Tips

Doodle it: Draw simple shapes and diagrams to help you tell the story.

Act it out: Use kid volunteers to act out the story as you tell it.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.