CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JANUARY242026

Scripture Story: Acts 4:32–5:11.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 7.

truth and you



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the sin of fraud against God was speedily punished. The same sin was often repeated in the after history of the church and is committed by many in our time. But though it may not be attended by the visible manifestation of God's displeasure, it is no less heinous in His sight now than in the apostles' time. The warning has been given; God has clearly manifested His abhorrence of this sin; and all who give themselves up to hypocrisy and covetousness may be sure that they are destroying their own souls" (The *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 76).

keytext

"Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 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."

(Acts 5:1, 2, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think—Y (yes) or N (no)?

____ A student can do well in school without cheating.
____ Truth is always the best policy.
____ Athletes caught cheating in sports should be severely punished.
____ Honesty pays.
____ People can't be true friends if they are not perfectly honest with each other.
____ It is possible to lie by saying nothing.

did you know?

God has made the proc-lamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people. Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord's work. Of the means entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—the tenth. He leaves all free to say whether or not they will give more than this. But when the heart is stirred by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and a vow is made to give a certain amount, the one who vows has no longer any right to the consecrated portion. Promises of this kind made to men would be looked upon as binding; are those not more binding that are made to God? Are promises tried in the court of conscience less binding than written agreements of men?" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 74).

INTO THE STORY

"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. 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 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

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

"Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 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.

"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? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was 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.'

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

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

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

"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.'

"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. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."

(Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the passages in the Into the Story *section and answer the following questions:*

Acts 4:32-35

What strikes you most about this picture of the early Christian church? What do you think the church needs to do today to recapture the core features of this biblical community?

Acts 4:36, 37

Note that Barnabas sold a field and "brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet." (The believers donated their proceeds in the same way—see verse 35.) In other words, he donated it with no strings attached. He said to the apostles, "You know where this money is needed most to build up the kingdom of God; I trust you enough to lay it at your feet." Contrast this attitude of giving to that of Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:1-11

What's the most shocking thing to you about this story? Why?

punch lines

"What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man" **(2 Corinthians 8:19-21, NIV).**

"But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them" **(Deuteronomy 15:7, NLT).**

"If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord—and he will repay you!" **(Proverbs 19:17, NLT).**

"Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you'" **(Hebrews 13:5, NLT).**

"Jesus told him, 'If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me'" **(Matthew 19:21, NLT).**

further insight

"It is God who blesses men with property, and He does this that they may be able to give toward the advancement of His cause."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 75

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 13:5.

Review your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section. Circle the statements that you are 100 percent sure about in the answer that you gave. Underline the statements that you could argue an answer of "Yes" or "No."

Sunday

Read 2 Corinthians 8:19-21.

Underline everything in the *Into the Story* section that teaches about integrity, hypocrisy, and giving. From the text, what can we learn about integrity?

_____

_____

What can we learn about hypocrisy?

_____

_____

What can we learn about giving?

_____

_____

Monday

Read Acts 5:1, 2.

Read the *Key Text* and consider these questions:

- Were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell the property and lay all the money at the feet of the apostles?
- What sin did they commit?
- Did their sin merit such stern punishment? Why or why not?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Deuteronomy 15:7.

Reflect on the comments of Ellen White that come just before her statements in the Flashlight section:

"Let truth telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth, and dissembling to suit one's own selfish plans, means shipwreck of faith. 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' Ephesians 6:14. He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. His falsehoods may seem to serve in emergencies; he may thus seem to make business advancement that he could not gain by fair dealing; but he finally reaches the place where he can trust no one. Himself a falsifier, he has no confidence in the word of others" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 76).

Wednesday

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Determine the key point in each verse. Then write one sentence that captures the core idea of all the texts.

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Proverbs 19:17.

How trustworthy am I? How can I nurture the trust that others put in me? How can I build my trust in God? How can I foster God's trust in me?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Matthew 19:21.

Marilee Jones, dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), resigned after admitting the résumé she submitted 28 years earlier for an entry level position in the admissions department was filled with lies. According to her résumé Jones had attended and graduated from Albany Medical College, Union College, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute—three well-respected schools in New York. In truth, she attended only Rensselaer as a part-time student for just one school year!

"I misrepresented my academic degrees when I first applied to MIT 28 years ago and did not have the courage to correct my résumé when I applied for my current job or at any time since," Ms. Jones said in a statement posted on MIT's Web site. "I am deeply sorry for this and for disappointing so many in the MIT community and beyond who supported me, believed in me, and who have given me extraordinary opportunities."

Since Ms. Jones took the position of dean of admissions in 1997, she has widely been considered a guru in the field. She is the author of several books, including Less Stress, More Success, in which she writes: "Holding integrity is sometimes very hard to do because the temptation may be to cheat or cut corners. But just remember that 'what goes around comes around,' meaning that life has a funny way of giving back what you put out."*

Ask yourself:

- Is there something from Ms. Jones's story that I should learn?
- Are there any compromises in my life that will come back to bite me?
- How can I live with nothing to hide?

_____

_____

_____

*Tamar Lewin, "Dean at MIT Resigns, Ending a 28-Year Lie," *New York Times*, April 27, 2007.

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapter 7.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.