

## Getting Started

Grace is often defined as *receiving what we don't deserve* and mercy as *not receiving what we do deserve*. Take time to thank the Lord for the many examples of His grace in your life as well as specific times that He has shown you mercy.

The story of Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5 also reminds us that our God is just and holy and, even in the life of a believer, He may bring divine discipline for His glory and the overall benefit of His people.

- How are these OT stories like what took place in Acts 5 ... 2 Samuel 6:1-8, Joshua 7, Numbers 15:32-36; 16:1-35?

## Discussion

- What is the contrast between Barnabus in Acts 4:32-37 and Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5?
- What was the specific sin that led to God's divine discipline of this couple?

*Peter accused Ananias by saying "Satan has so filled your heart so that you have lied to the Holy Spirit". The verb translated "filled" is "elperosen" in the Greek which has the idea of control or influence. The same verb is used in the command, "Be filled with the Spirit" in Ephesians 5:18. Ananias, as a believer, allowed himself to be influenced by Satan, not the Spirit. The fact that Peter asked, "How is it ...?" implies that Satan had gained control because Ananias had not dealt with some previous sin in his life. -- The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

- How might this story be an example of what Peter later wrote in 1 Peter 4:17 that judgment was to begin with the family of God? Could this be a case of "sin that leads to death" (1 John 5:16, 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)?

*God's reasons for bringing about the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira involve His abhorrence of sin, the hypocrisy of the couple, and the lesson for the rest of the church, both then and now. It can be easy today to gloss over the holiness of God, to forget that He is righteous and pure and that He hates sin wholeheartedly. This particular sin of hypocrisy in the church was dealt with swiftly and decisively.*

*Were Ananias and Sapphira saved? We believe they probably were. Their story is told in the context of the actions of "all the believers" (Acts 4:32). They knew of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3), and Ananias's lie could have been an earlier promise that he would give the whole amount of the sale to the Lord. But the best evidence that they were children of God may be that they received discipline: "If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all" (Hebrews 12:8; see also 1 Corinthians 5:12). Ananias and his wife had conspired to garner the accolades of the church; but their conspiracy led to the sin unto death.*

– [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

- It appears that this severe discipline on God's part was to set an example like how Achan was an example to Israel (1 Corinthians 10:6, Joshua 7). Based on what we read in Acts 5:5, 11, 12-16, what was the impact of this "example"?
- In what ways may you be "testing the Holy Spirit" to see how much you can get away with or how close you can get to sin without experiencing God's discipline? Take time to confess this and turn from it (repent).

- How do you think the experience with Ananias and Sapphira may have strengthened the church to face the ongoing persecution that followed in Acts 5:17-40?
- What inspires and encourages you most in Acts 5:41-42 as you consider the Apostle's response to the flogging they received in the name of Jesus?

*The incident involving Ananias and Sapphira helped to establish the apostles' authority in the church. The sinners had fallen dead at Peter's feet. It was Peter who had known of the secret sin and had the authority to pronounce judgment in the church (see [Matthew 16:19](#)). If the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira had succeeded in fooling Peter, it would have severely damaged the apostles' authority.*

*The sad story of Ananias and Sapphira is not some obscure incident from the Old Testament regarding a violation of Mosaic Law. This occurred in the first-century church to believers in Jesus Christ. The story of Ananias and Sapphira is a reminder to us today that God sees the heart ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)), that He hates sin, and that He is concerned for the purity of His church ([1 Corinthians 11](#); [1 John 5](#)). As Jesus told the compromising church in Thyatira, "All the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds" ([Revelation 2:23](#)).*

*- [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)*

## Prayer

God, how's my heart right now? What needs to change? Read and pray through Psalm 139:23-24 in response to these questions.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*