



WELCOME AND CONNECT (OPTIONAL)

- Have you ever been part of a community (church, team, workplace, family) where what people said publicly didn't match what was happening privately?
How did that affect trust?

Follow-up (optional):

- What makes a community feel safe and authentic?

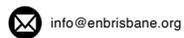


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SETTING THE SCENE

The early church in Acts is only weeks old. The Holy Spirit has been poured out. People are being saved daily. Unity, generosity, and bold witness mark the community.

But Luke does something deliberate:

He shows us a powerful picture of unity — and then immediately reveals a crack in the foundation.

This passage is about holiness.

Defining Key Terms

Holiness – Being set apart for God; moral and spiritual integrity that reflects God’s character.

Integrity – Wholeness: when your inner life and outer life match.

Hypocrisy – Pretending to be spiritually mature or surrendered while hiding the truth.

Fear of the Lord – Reverent awe and deep awareness that God is truly present and holy.

WORD

Acts 4:32–37 (ESV)

Now 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. And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There 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 and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Acts 5:1–11 (ESV)

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and 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. But 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? While 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.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” But 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.” Immediately, 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. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

GROUP DISCUSSION

A. Unity and Power (Acts 4:32–33)

The church is described as:

- One heart and soul
- Generous
- Marked by great power and great grace

Discussion Questions (PICK 1-2 questions)

1. What do you notice about the connection between unity and spiritual power?
2. Why do you think generosity flowed so naturally from this community?
3. Where does disunity usually begin — externally or internally?
4. If integrity means wholeness, where are we most tempted to live divided lives?

Reflection:

Is there any gap between what people see spiritually and what is actually happening in your heart?

GROUP DISCUSSION (cont...)

B. Barnabas vs Ananias: Same Action, Different Heart

Both sold property.

Both brought money.

Only one story ends in life.

Peter makes it clear:

The sin was not keeping money.

The sin was pretending to give all while keeping some.

Discussion Questions (PICK 1-2 questions)

1. Why is image management so tempting in church culture?
2. What is more dangerous: open weakness or hidden hypocrisy? Why?
3. Where are you tempted to exaggerate your surrender to look more spiritual?
4. What does partial obedience look like in modern Christian life?
 - Finances?
 - Sexual purity?
 - Leadership?
 - Serving?
 - Confession?

Heart Check:

If the Holy Spirit asked you today, “Is there anything you’re pretending about?” — what might surface?

C. Why Was the Judgment So Severe?

This is often confronting for new believers.

Important clarity:

- God did not strike them for imperfect giving.
- He acted against deliberate deception at the birth of the Church.
- The issue was lying to the Holy Spirit.

At key moments in Scripture, God protects His presence decisively.

Discussion Questions (PICK 1-2 Questions)

1. What does this story teach us about how seriously God takes holiness?
2. Why is holiness essential for a church’s credibility?
3. How does hidden sin eventually affect mission?
4. What happens when a church loses the fear of the Lord?

D. “Great Fear Came Upon Them All” (5:11)

This is not panic.

It is reverent awe.

The early church realised:

God is not symbolic.

He is present.

Discussion Questions (Pick 1-2 Questions)

1. What is the difference between fearing God and being afraid of God?
2. How does reverence actually create freedom?
3. Where might we have grown casual with holy things?

5. GOSPEL CENTER (5 mins)

For anyone newer to faith:

Holiness is not about earning God’s love.

Jesus has already secured that through the cross.

But grace does not eliminate transformation — it produces it.

The same Spirit who exposes hypocrisy also empowers honesty.

We do not pursue holiness to be accepted.

We pursue holiness because we are accepted.

▲ ACTIVATION AND PRAYER

Personal **Reflection** (Quiet Moment)

Ask:

- Is there any area of hidden compromise?
- Am I seeking reputation or surrender?
- Is my inner life aligned with my public faith?

Encourage silent confession.

Corporate Prayer

Pray for:

- Undivided hearts
- A culture of honesty
- Courage to confess quickly
- Reverent awe of God's presence
- Great grace and great power upon EN Brisbane