**Acts | The Beginning of Wisdom:** Pleasing God in All Things

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| 07.19-20.14 | MHC | Acts 5:1-11 | Integrity is the fruit of a God-fearing life. | 30 Min |

**Prayer and Introduction**Attn: **“Character is what you are in the dark.” –Moody**. Who you are when no one but God sees. The ‘Stuff you are made of” –the inner beliefs/convictions drive actions.

* “We talk about someone being “In character” or out: ref. to consistency, integrity
* “Every man has 3 characters—that which he exhibits, that which he has, and that which he thinks he has”[[1]](#endnote-1) – **C. come from conviction at core, constancy overtime**

Them: **Godly character is the outflow of a transformed life**. A relationship with God bears the fruit of intimacy with Him, generosity toward others and integrity at their core.

Relv: **If we are honest, we all have a bit of spiritual schizophrenia**: our actions don’t match up with our beliefs or convictions. We believe one thing and do another.

* We have actions we do that we hope no one ever finds out. Private practices per life

Struct: Today we’ll look at character of A & S and challenge “**The habits of our heart”.** B/c they did not have a right view of God, they sold their soul/even life for selfish gain

**Fruit of a God-fearing community: Overview of the context/series:**

Acts 1-2: The ascension of Christ, reestablish 12 and filling of the HS. Peter Preached!

Acts 3: Lame beggar was healed and excitement rose as Peter preached again. Jesus alive!

Acts 4: **Two key words: boldness and generosity**. Through the first part of this chapter we see the outside pressure of the religious leaders over the boldness of the apostles to declare the name of Jesus and the healing of the lame beggar healed.

**Now we will look at Acts 5: Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts 5:1-11**

* Vs 4:32-37 we see that Barnabas was a man that sold property and gave all that he had sold it for to the church. **The fruit of a God-fearing life yield generosity toward others** (Barnabas and “all things in common”). **w/o it, selfishness.**
* **Now in 5 we see the first conflict internally within the people of the early church.** Up to this point there was external pressure, now internal trial. Getting real.
* **(Exegetical Idea)** I believe the Author, Luke wanted to show that the eye of God was on all the actions, words and intentions of the early church and he was calling them to the highest level of integrity. Keeping purity in His people.

**Intimacy with God comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: Don’t forget the Spirit is at work**: Before and after these first 11 verses of Ch. 5 we see the Spirit of God as the very thing that was emboldening them, using them and uniting them.

* Five verses before this passage it says, “**They were filled with the HS**” (v 31) and “Giving testimony to the “**Great grace that was upon them all**” (v 33).
* Then right after this passage it says, “**Many signs and wonders were being done**.”
* **Two statements of the HS moving sandwich this story in**. It is safe to assume that God is moving through this Spirit as well, despite the death & disappointment

**Vv. 1-6: The Negative Example of Selfishness and Deceit** (Sum. after reading)

* **Ananias and Sapphira:** Don’t know a lot about them, except that they owned land and were some of the first members of the early church. Married, no mention of kids
* **V2 – “With his wife’s knowledge”** They mutually decided to hold back some of the money, not presenting all of it for the use of the greater community and God.
* **They were not living in unity with God or others in the church.** Selfishness.
* **At the core of this story is deception.** You may think God was upset about not getting all the money, and while that was disappointing, that was not the main issue:
	+ **We see Peter say to them, “Why have you chosen to lie to the Holy Spirit?”** This is the core issue – not that he didn’t give all the money.
	+ **Peter said, “After it was sold, was it not at your disposal?”** They could have kept something if they wanted to, but the problem appears to be that they acted like they were giving it all, but in fact had kept some for themselves.

**w/o a right view of God’s generosity to you,** foster a lifestyle of greed = self

* **The Greek word here *nosphizo,* “Keep Back”** means to put aside something for your own benefit in deceitful way. – GREED (squirrel pic) intense desire $, food.
* **Greed comes in all forms:** Deceit – acting like things are one way, when they are actually another; Steeling – taking what isn’t yours b/c you think you are owed it; idol-supporting – Money may foster idols of security, beauty, image etc.
* **Ownership vs. stewardship**: Ownership = greed, stewardship = generosity

**Greed it the fruit of a self-centered life; it cheapens the grace of God and the intimacy He offers. Again Peter says, “You have not lied to men, but to God”.** Why did they think they could get away with then when they know God is all-knowing?

**Satan doesn’t want what God wants: Satan is the father of lies**

* **Peter said to Ananias “Why has Satan filled your heart?” and “Why have you contrived this deed in your heart?”** This was a deep offense in the heart of A & S
* **The second we start to believe that God doesn’t care about the small things we compromise on, we make room for Satan to dwell in our lives.**
* **Lying is a key characteristic of Satan: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**–John 8:44 Anything other than truth in words/character is opposite of God
* **Lying is nowhere in the character of God:** Num. 23:19, **“God is not man, that he should lie”** and Prov. 30:5, **“Every word of God proves true”** and Titus 1:2, **“God, who never lies”** and Heb 6:18, **“It is impossible for God to lie”**
* **We work hard to teach our kids:** Chan, “Did grandma tell you something?” story.

**God is omnipotent and omnipresent:** comfort to righteous, dread to the guilty

* **Heb 4:13, “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”**
* **Gal 6:7-10 – *Go read it.* Intimacy is total honesty.** Neglecting God’s perspective or priorities is tragic and will end with God having to remove himself from you 🡪

(Trans) **So in vs 5-6 we see that Ananias immediately die and be buried**

* **This is an unmistakable judgment of God** on Him for deceiving God. God cared about the extent of Anania’s generosity, he cared more about his character.
* **No ceremony or even time to go tell his wife,** immediate burial b/c God did this
* “**Great fear came upon all who heard of it.**” *Talk more about this in a min*, but feel what they must have felt—a new need to check yourself and be right before God.

**Vv. 7-10: The deceit and death of Sapphira:** a second chance for truth not taken

* **3 hours later, but she did not know A was dead.** Perhaps she would have responded differently if she knew, but now this was test of her character.
* **The question - NIV: Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."** But peter knew that was not the price, but only a partial amount. *EX:* *Sold 60k but only brought 50k.*
* **Her loyalty was more with her husband than with God**. APP: I get it – this can be a powerful pull; when you love someone that is tangible, it can be a greater pull to please them over the unseen God—but that doesn’t make it right!
	+ **There may be some of you engaging with things that are wrong b/c someone you love has asked you to do so;** this is not right and the most loving thing you can do is to correct them in the truth of God.
* **Peter asked, “How is it that you have agreed to test God?”** and then pronounces her husbands death and her impending death. He knew God would deal with her the same way – I don’t believe Peter killed her. A chance to tell truth, failed.

**There is a fine line between testing God and trusting God.**

* **For some reason they chose to hold on to some of the money, maybe it was a lack of trust. We know it was at least selfish—their keeping some but acting like it was all,** this was at the lowest level people pleasing but may have been more.
* **Peter accuses them of “Testing God”** – what does that mean? Two types in Bible:
* **ACCEPTABLE: Testing God with Faith, no deceit or selfish gain.** In Malachi 3:10 (summarized) God tells the people of Israel to give Him everything and says “Put me to the test” to see if I will give you more than you ever asked or imagined.
* **UNACCEPTABLE testing God with deceit or selfish gain, as if he has to prove something to you.** In Deut 6:16 (which Jesus quotes in Matt 4:7 and Luke 4:12) it says, **“Do not put your lord God to the Test.”**
* ILL/APP: **don’t have an attitude of “You owe me” or “You better do this for me, or else.”** God owes you nothing, and is God whether you believe or not. He calls for your faith in Him and surrender to His will above your own.
* (Trans) **an attitude of testing God has a lack of reverence or fear of Him**.

**V 11: The fear of the Lord falls on the people**

* **Great fear** (vv. 5 and 11) fell on all the people. This was a righteous respect for God and his commands on His people. Not “afraid” — God in his rightful place
* **For the unbeliever, the fear of God is the fear of the judgment of God** and eternal death, which is eternal separation from God (Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:31).
* **For the believer, the fear of God is something much different: Awe reverence**
* **The church** is mentioned first here – God’s people fulfilling God’s heart.

**The fear of God is the reason we have charcter and integirty**

* “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction**.” - Proverbs 1:7 | THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM
* concluding statement:**When we live in the fear of The Lord we yield fruits of integrity in ourselves, generosity towards others, and intimacy with God!**
* **The payoff for a life of integrity is** (1) more of God, (2) freedom from guilt or shame, (3) authenticity and generosity with God and all people all the time.
	+ Integrity is not a matter of outward appearance but of inward righteousness.
	+ Character determines behavior just as behavior demonstrates character.
* **When the Gospel is center, we can’t help but live this way**. When we (our preference) are king, we will be in slavery to those things first and displease God.
	+ **Give me your sin and I will give you salvation**! **Steward this w/ integrity.**

COMMUNION – God so loved the world he GAVE. So generous.

1. Alphonse Karr [↑](#endnote-ref-1)