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Bible Study Sheet
November 5, 2025

“INTEGRITY IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH”
(Acts 4:36–5:11)

INTRODUCTION

We have been exploring what it means to live as a Community of Faith—a people who do not walk independently but share life together through Christ. In Acts 4 and 5, we see two very different examples of how believers relate to the community and to God. One builds unity; the other breaks it.

THE CONTRAST: BARNABAS AND ANANIAS

At the end of Acts 4, Joseph, called Barnabas (the “Son of Encouragement”), sold a piece of property and brought all the proceeds to the apostles. His act was one of pure generosity—an expression of love and unity within the community.

But in Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira also sold property but secretly kept part of the proceeds for themselves while pretending to give it all. Their deception introduced corruption into a community that had been marked by truth and shared purpose.

Peter’s response reveals the heart of the issue:

“Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?... You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” (Acts 5:3–4)

This wasn’t about the amount given—it was about deception and spiritual dishonesty.

THE MEANING OF “KEPT BACK”

In verse 2, the phrase “kept back” is from a Greek word meaning to embezzle, misappropriate, or steal. It’s the same word used in Joshua 7:1 when Achan kept what was devoted to God. Luke uses this word deliberately to show that Ananias’ act was a breach of covenant trust with God. Ananias’ sin was not that he gave less—it was that he pretended to give all. You cannot pretend total surrender. You can fool people, but you cannot fool God.

THE IMPACT OF DISHONESTY

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own.” (Acts 4:32)

Ananias disrupted that unity. His deceit threatened the trust and credibility of the church's witness. When dishonesty is tolerated, the church's integrity and power are weakened.

Too many believers today want credibility without accountability—to be condoned, not confronted. But the community of faith must protect its holiness and unity.

WHAT ANANIAS TEACHES US

1. **Pretending to Be Something You're Not:** Many profess surrender but hold back parts of life from God. "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Matthew 15:8)
2. **Performing for People Instead of Pleasing God:** True worship is not performance. "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them." (Matthew 6:1)
3. **Selective Obedience:** Some obey what's convenient but ignore what challenges them. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46)
4. **Using Religion to Cover Sin:** Religious activity can never hide moral compromise. What's done in secret will always come to light.
5. **Reputation Without Surrender:** Ananias wanted the honor of Barnabas without the heart of Barnabas. He sought recognition, not transformation. This is performative spirituality—seeking applause over authenticity.
6. **Defilement in the Community:** Like Achan in Joshua 7, Ananias' deceit threatened the holiness of the community. God acted decisively to preserve purity and integrity among His people.

THE LESSON

This passage is not about money, but motives. God desires truth in the inward parts. (Psalm 51:6) He calls His people to give, serve, and worship with sincerity. You cannot talk faith while living in fear or profess trust while walking in deceit. When believers live with integrity—open-handed and honest before God—the community of faith becomes a powerful witness of God's grace and truth.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Acts 4:32–37; Acts 5:1–11; Joshua 7:1; Matthew 6:1; Matthew 15:8; Luke 6:46; Psalm 51:6

REFLECTION QUESTION

In what areas of your life might you be "keeping back" from God? How can you practice authentic surrender and integrity within your community of faith?