

[Acts 5:1-11](#)

(1) Now a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a possession, (2) And kept back part of the price for himself, his wife also being aware of it; and he brought a certain portion and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why did Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the estate? (4) Before it was sold, was it not yours? And after you sold it, was it not in your own authority? Why did you contrive this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." (5) And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all those who heard these things. (6) Then the young men wound him up, and carried him out and buried him. (7) Now it came to pass about three hours later that his wife also came in, not knowing what had taken place. (8) And Peter said to her, "Tell me if you sold the estate for so much?" And she said, "Yes, for so much." (9) Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out." (10) And she immediately fell down at his feet and expired. And the young men came in and found her dead; and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. (11) Then great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things.

A Faithful Version

The narrative of Ananias and Sapphira provides a dramatic illustration of the fact that [God](#) will not accept duplicity in His church. *Partial commitment to the truth is not enough.* In the case of this ancient couple, He judged “the secrets of men by Christ Jesus” without delay, stopping the lie literally dead in its tracks.

Although unstated in the account, Ananias and Sapphira likely coveted the status and reputation they would receive if God's people came to believe they were “big” contributors. With Satan's prodding (verse 3), they (Sapphira is fully complicit; verse 2) hatched the deceitful plan to sell some property and donate part of the proceeds for the use of the brethren. In reality, they conspire to mislead the church leadership (and ultimately, the brethren at large) into thinking that their generous gift comprised the entire sale price of the land, when in fact they had surreptitiously “kept back” a portion of the proceeds for their personal use. Their level of sacrifice for the needs of the church was not what they led others to believe.

Had God not intervened to abort their plan, they would have lived lives of hypocrisy for who knows how long, daily “practicing” the lie ([Revelation 22:15](#)) that they had “given all” to God. Without question, they would have lived the same sort of burdensome lives endured by Joseph's brothers for decades after their clandestine treachery toward their younger brother (see [Genesis 37:23-36](#)), as they feared serendipity every moment—a slip of the tongue, the development of an unwelcome and unforeseen circumstance, the vengeance of God, anything which might suddenly reveal the truth to their father, exposing them as the rogues they really were. Theirs was a skulking lifestyle—the way of life of any hypocrite, analogous to perpetually wearing a mask or a disguise to hide the real self, pretending to be one person, all the while being another.

But that is only half of the nasty story. Sir Walter Scott well wrote, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, / When first we practice to deceive.” The hypocrite, enjoying the benefits of his duplicity (such as wealth, status, etc.) becomes desperately committed to maintaining the façade at any cost, doing all that becomes necessary to keep the charade going, lest he suffer financial, social, or emotional losses that his carnality could not accept. The cause of perpetuating the lie comes to enmesh his spirit. The myth becomes master.

Luke does not specify the amount of money Ananias and Sapphira held back. Was it 5% of the sales price or 20% or 50%? We do not know, and it does not matter! A lie is a lie. There are no “little white lies.” A life of duplicity can develop around any lie, big or little. It will always bear the same fruit, however.

To learn more, see:

[Unity and Division: The Blessing and the Curse \(Part Five\)](#)

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