

# K.E.Y. Bible Study

**Description:** K.E.Y. Bible Study introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

**Purpose:** To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to:

- Keep the faith that we have received
- Be Equipped to serve the Body of Christ
- Become Yoked, or connect, with others for the purpose of ministry

## The Consequences of Sin Acts 4:32- 5:11 September 30, 2015

### General Background

Just as individual Bible verses taken out of context can be used to support many false ideas, Bible stories taken out of context can be dangerous as well. This story has been misused by cult leaders and sinful religious leaders to support abusing and stifling opposition. Others have used this story as a means of motivating people through fear to give to the church and religious causes. Yet, when read in context of the running narrative of Acts, this passage helps us understand the importance of Christian community and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This event occurred sometime within five years after the day of Pentecost, more than likely within the first few years. It is estimated that by this time between 4500 and 5000 followers of Jesus were living in Jerusalem. Most of the followers of Jesus did not see themselves as part of a new religion but as followers of a fulfilled or completed Judaism.

### What Happened

**Acts 4:32: All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.**

The Christian community did provide for each other's physical and material needs. They lived out their lives more like family than neighbors. This story gives evidence of the voluntarily sharing of possessions described in Acts 2:42-47.

**Acts 4:33: With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.**

Not only did they tell of the power of the resurrection, but they also gave evidence of new (or resurrected) life through their actions. For people who had once been selfish to begin sharing all of their possessions required a new kind attitude. When we give to others, we are providing evidence that we have received grace. To be selfish is to imply we have not received grace.

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**Acts 4:34-35:** There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Placing a gift at someone's feet was a symbolic way of indicating that you were making a gift without conditions attached. Some members of the Christian community sold property and gave the money to be used for the good of the community.

**Acts 4:36-37:** Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas moved from Cyprus to Jerusalem with other Hellenistic Jews. Some assumed that he was the cousin of John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark. The nickname "Barnabas" meant "Son of Encouragement" or possibly even "Son of Exhortation." He was a key figure in the first-century church, and most scholars believe that he was one of the 70 sent out by Jesus in Luke 10. Encouragers are unselfish by nature. His generosity (giving the proceeds from the sale of the field) would have caused rejoicing.

**Acts 5:1:** Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

This married couple was apparently well-known in the church. His name means "God Has Graciously Given" and her name means "Beautiful." There is irony in his name just as there is irony in people calling themselves Christians and being selfish. This couple gave the appearance of following the example of Barnabas.

**Acts 5:2:** With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

They were not required to give any or all of the money to the church family, but they were intentionally leaving the impression they were giving it all. They wanted to appear as if they were doing something they were not doing. This is the epitome of hypocrisy. There is a similarity to the story of Achan's sin in Joshua 7. Both related to misuse and deceit regarding what had been dedicated to God.

**Acts 5:3-4:** Then Peter said, "Ananias how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And, after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

Peter used the same "filled" as Paul used in Ephesians describing the filling of the Holy Spirit. We either cooperate with God in allowing our hearts to be filled with Holy Spirit, or we allow

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the spirit of the evil one to fill our heart. In Acts 5:4, it is important to note that Peter identified lying to the Holy Spirit as the act of lying to other Christians. Dishonesty among Christians is a serious sin.

**Acts 5:5: When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.**

This is one of the great, understated responses in the Bible. Fear would have been dominant.

**Acts 5:6: Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.**

First-century burial custom required burial within hours because embalming was not practiced. There is nothing unusual about the burial, just the death.

**Acts 5:7-10: About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.**

Sapphira was confronted about her knowledge and complicity in the scheme. She experienced the same fate as her late husband.

**Acts 5:11: Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.**

Fear is two-dimensional: 1) When Christians fear God, it is for His power and reverence for His person; and 2) When non-believers fear God, it is a sense of terror. This is also the first time the word “church” is used in the book of Acts. The Greek word translated “church” literally means “called out ones.” It was used in the secular culture to mean those who were called out to attend community meetings. It is a powerful reminder that the church has been called out. As a result, we will live and act differently than the world.

## What Does It Mean and How Can I Apply It?

- Deception is the result of an evil heart.
- We are accountable for our actions, even when evil is in our heart. We cannot blame evil and excuse ourselves.
- In this passage, the condemned sin was deception, not a lack of generosity.
- When Christians lie, we lie to the Holy Spirit.