



WEEKLY STUDY

The Marks of a Movement - Week Five

One of the constants in this world is the presence of things we can't explain. Flash floods that take the lives of young children, a young husband and father who dies very unexpectedly, cancer that has returned. The story from Acts 5.1-11 is one that has challenged Christians for centuries. How are we supposed to understand the surprising deaths of two early church members? Spend time in prayer and study this week seeking to understand and claim the serious nature of what it means to follow Jesus.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Continue to join us in prayer for families of the victims in the floods Texas and in the central USA. May God guide those still searching for the victims and those who mourn and look for hope.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 5.1-11 (NIV)

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.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.

³ 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? ⁴ 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 just to human beings but to God.”

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

- This story is as troubling for us as it was for the “whole church” in Acts 5. Church members fell dead after being questioned about their offering...that looks like a bad practice for a growing church! But notice what this passage does not say. This passage does not expressly say that God struck down Ananias and Sapphira, it says that they each fell down and died. Their death was connected to their sin of lying about their offering. Could they have chosen to keep the proceeds of their land sale? Yes, of course. Could they have said, “We are giving a portion of the proceeds of our land sale”? Absolutely. But that’s not what they did. They intentionally deceived the church, its leaders, and lied to God (lied to the Holy Spirit). The weight of such conviction was too much for their hearts to bear. As Pastor Jacob mentioned in Sunday’s message, this is serious business! Have you noticed a connection between the offerings you give to the church or others and your own sense of well-being? Can you be a cheerful giver ([2 Cor. 9.6-7](#)) and deceitful at the same time?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9.6-7)**
- *God, increase in me an impulse of generosity. Allow my giving to be free from deception in a way that flows from the life you have given to me. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 5.1-2 (NIV)

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.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.

- Ananias and Sapphira ALSO sold a piece of property. Everyone knew about Joseph (known as Barabbas') gift of 100% of his proceeds from selling a field. He was an "encourager", and he was all-in on the movement. It appears that the couple here in Acts 5 noticed the attention his gift had received. They may have originally been inspired to do the same thing, but somehow their motives got mixed up. Peter identified that it was Satan that had mixed up their motives by whispering into their ears. By the time they presented their gift, they were lying to the whole community. Have you ever felt your motives shifting from pure to selfish?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6.38)**
- *God, teach me to give with my whole heart. Help me to give and not expect anything in return. Purify my heart O God. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 5.7-9 (NIV)

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

- It looks like Sapphira had been kept in a sound-proof room during the earlier conversation. She didn't know that her husband had just dropped dead to the floor because of his commitment to a lie. As the audience, we might wish for someone to tip her off. Tell her it's not too late to be honest! When Peter asks his question "Tell me, is this the price..." he is giving her that opportunity. Her heart was so far down the path of Satan's influence that she couldn't turn back. Her words, "Yes, that is the price." fell out of her mouth and surely her heart rate went through the roof. Sticking to the lie led to death. How does this story make you feel? What parts of it do you wrestle with? What lessons do you take away?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**
¹¹ **Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.**
¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalm 51.10-12)**
 - *O God, in moments of testing and inclinations towards deceit, I cling to your salvation. Grant me a willing spirit to live for you. Amen.*

THURSDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.42-49 (NIV)

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

- When we face situations that we can't fully understand, we are reminded of our own limitations. As humans on earth, we are fully tied to this earthly existence. In our human weakness, we can put all of our eggs in the earthly basket (if you will!). But in Christ Jesus, we can come to know that there is more than this physical world and this physical body. We are moving from the existence of “the first man” (Adam– who was all about the dust of the earth from which he came) to the second man (Jesus—who, even while walking on this physical earth, brought heaven with him). We who follow the second man will bear his image! Are there ways in which you are beginning to bear the image of Jesus?

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- **Prayer Prompt: So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1.27)**
 - *Jesus Christ, Son of God, I look to you for my transformation from being earthly minded to heavenly minded in my day to day living. Amen.*

FRIDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.50-53 (NIV)

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

- In the face of tragedy, we have hope in Jesus that allows us to hold on to the mystery of life after death. That which was designed to fade away will, in fact, live forever! How do you picture the moment of the last trumpet sounding?

- **Prayer Prompt: we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4.17)**
- *Lord God, lead me to lift up my eyes and look forward to being caught up with Jesus and the saints in heaven. Amen.*

SATURDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.54-57 (NIV)

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

*"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"*

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- There is a kind of humble confidence that can wash over a follower of Jesus when we realize that death is no longer the final threat it once was. How does this promise laid out by Paul in 1 Corinthians impact your daily life?

- **Prayer Prompt: “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15.55)**
- *God, I want to live out of this promise that death has been defeated. Give me boldness to proclaim that death has been swallowed up in victory! Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob described a few approaches to Christianity that are prevalent in today's culture. **How are each of these present in your experience? Have any of them been a part of your story? How does your community and your spiritual practices help you to leave them behind? What does authentic Christianity look like?**

- **Casual Christianity.** The idea that you can be a Christian but it doesn't have to affect a whole lot. It's easy.
- **Cultural Christianity** The idea that it is culturally acceptable to claim and be a Christian. Being a Christian isn't going to get you noticed.
- **Inherited Christianity** The idea that “my parents were Christians so I guess I'm one”.