



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N11 March 15, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

“The Blessing of Godly Fear”

Acts 5:1-11

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Faithfulness

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.”

Proverbs 3:3-4



How is faithfulness expressed?

Faithfulness is in short supply. Brand loyalty, team loyalty, and employment longevity seem to be relics of the past. Even Yellowstone’s famous geyser Old Faithful is not as frequently faithful as it was in the 1930’s.

Even the most sophisticated of our day want faithfulness in everyday life. Most will pay a premium for reliable plumbing, air conditioning and wifi. We’ll call a lawyer or the police if our banker, accountant or locksmith is unfaithful.

The biblical concept of faithfulness is perhaps best communicated by the Hebrew term *hesed*. *Hesed* is a complex word that at its root means “goodness” or “kindness.” *Hesed* is more than a feeling or a state of mind. *Hesed* is action-oriented kindness that seeks to rescue, benefit, and love. *Hesed* does not fail as it is loyal and is expressed through intense commitment. *Hesed* is so grand that the word is often paired with other words such as forgiveness, mercy, compassion, faithfulness and love to explain its meaning. *Hesed* is more than any of these companion words and is so exalted that the majority of its uses in the Old Testament are used to describe God. “The use of the word in the Hebrew Bible indicates that *hesed* is characteristic of God rather than human beings; it is rooted in the divine nature, and it is expressed because of who he is, not because of what humanity is or needs or desires or deserves. Yahweh’s tenacious commitment to Israel even in the face of their blatant and persistent rebellion demonstrates that *hesed* is an enduring quality of God” (Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, 267).

If faithfulness of the *hesed* strain is primarily an expression of God, how is it that we as lowly creatures are able to express it? According to Clark, while *hesed* is used with both God and humans, the recipients of *hesed* are always human and never divine (Clark, 259). God is the example and source of our own human attempts of expressing goodness,

kindness and intense commitment. Learning from God’s faithfulness, we can love others in ways similar to the way God loves. We will never be perfect at *hesed* love but we can strive to love others with this godlike love.

Jesus teaches us that expressing this action oriented love to others, particularly the needy, is a way to make God the recipient of our love and faithfulness. Jesus stated that those who fed him, clothed him or visited him in prison are those who will inherit his kingdom. In Jesus’ telling those who heard these words inquired as to when he the King was ever in such need. Jesus famously answered, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40 ESV). How do we express faithful *hesed* love to Jesus? By loving even the least of humans around us. When I love others with action-oriented, tenacious commitment and care, I am also loving God.

Unfortunately, the inverse of this teaching of Jesus is also true. Jesus had warnings for those who would not inherit the kingdom because they did not express compassion to those in need. Jesus took their lack of compassion as proof that they did not know him. Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Mt 25:45 ESV). Not loving or mistreating our neighbor in some sense is dishonoring God. Paul got this same message from Jesus on the road to Damascus. “He heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (Act 9:4 ESV) Scripture never recorded Paul historically doing anything to physically persecute Jesus. Yet Jesus equated mistreatment of his followers from Paul as mistreatment of himself.

Faithfulness, in the *hesed* sense, is our opportunity to share God’s love for us with others. Doing so is one way we can demonstrate our love to God. Failing to love others is failing to love God. Faithfulness to people is a profound way to express faithfulness to God.

Read Acts 5:1-11

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. [ESV]

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle the word "but" in v. 1 showing a contrast with Acts 4:32-37.
- Underline the words "kept back" in v. 2 and "keep back" in v. 3.
- Double underline the word "heart" in v. 3 and v. 4.
- Draw a line from the words "Spirit" in v. 3 and v. 9.
- Place brackets around the words "lie" in v. 3, "lied" in v. 4 and "test" in v. 9.
- Draw line connecting the word "contrived" in v. 4 with the words "agreed together" in v. 9.
- Circle the words "great fear" in v. 5 and v. 11.
- Place a box around the word "church" in v. 11.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. How does the description of Barnabas and the believers in Acts 4:32-37 differ from Acts 5:1-11?
2. Of what charges was Ananias guilty?
3. What motivated Ananias' misdeeds?
4. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from this account of Ananias and Sapphira?
5. How does one lie to the Holy Spirit?
6. What does "testing" the Spirit of the Lord suggest?
7. What were the results of Ananias and Sapphira's sin?
8. Death for failing to disclose the full details of a property sale seems harsh. Do you think the punishment fit the crime for Ananias and Sapphira? Explain your answer.
9. What is the "church" (v. 11)?
10. What can believers and churches do today to prevent errors like those of Ananias and Sapphira?

The passion and impact of the first church in Jerusalem as described in the Book of Acts was impressive. The Apostles were preaching to large crowds (Acts 2:41; 4:4). They were performing many signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 3:10; 4:30; 5:12). Believers were devoting themselves to prayer, fellowship, communion and shared resources (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32). Even when the early church's leaders were arrested, the church grew exponentially (Acts 4:4). The closing words of Acts 4 highlight the exemplary testimony of a man radically transformed by God who was now changing his world through his encouragement and generosity. Nothing seemed to faze this new community of faith. Nothing, that is, until things inside the community of faith began to unravel. When the enemy cannot conquer with external attack, he often will look for opportunities to destroy from within. Such is the case with a reputable pair described in Acts 5. "The early church not only faced an external threat from the temple authorities but also an internal threat. An internal problem will also appear in the dispute between Hebrews and Hellenists in 6:1-6. These internal problems occupy much less of the narrative than the external conflict, for they are quickly and decisively resolved in single scenes. However, it is significant that there are problems in the internal life of even the earliest church. The portrait is not so idealized as to deny the necessity of clearly facing problems in order to preserve and restore the life to which the church has been called" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, 79).

Like Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37), Ananias and Sapphira decided to sell property and bring the proceeds to the Apostles (Acts 5:1). In strong contrast to Barnabas, Ananias and his wife decided to "keep back" some of the sale and only offered part of the funds to the Apostles. There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these actions. The sin of Ananias was giving the impression of donating 100% of the proceeds of his sale (as Barnabas and others had) when he and wife decided to keep a percentage of the proceeds and not divulge the deduction. Peter's question to Sapphira confirmed such deceit (Acts 5:8). Peter called such a tactic a "lie to the Holy Spirit." Peter sourced this transgression with Satan but held Ananias and Sapphira as ultimately responsible as they "contrived this deed" in their hearts. Lying may seem trivial to some and not worthy of a death sentence. But Jesus said, "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much" (Lk 16:10 ESV). Ananias and Sapphira attempted to appropriate the admiration of Barnabas' generosity without revealing the deceit of their greedy concealment. This lie was hypocrisy. "When Ananias and Sapphira deliberately lied, they took upon themselves the moral character of the one who is behind all lies, the devil himself" (H. Wayne House, "Acts," in *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1374).

Ananias' lying was also transmuted from people to God. When Ananias and Sapphira brought their gift to the human leaders of the church, they reported to them the fraudulent size of the sale and the impressive size of their gift. Luke recorded no prayers, vows or sacrifices to God from Ananias and his bride. All that this nefarious couple did was before and with people. They did lie, exaggerate and strut their benevolence before the believers in Jerusalem, but they made no pledges to God. Yet Peter keenly observed that their lies were not just made amongst peers. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to people they really were lying to God. Peter asked, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Peter concluded, "You have not lied to man but to God." Just as we can serve God by serving others (Mt 25:40) we can also not love or even show hate to God when we hate others (1 Jn 4:20-21).

This prideful plot cooked up by Ananias and Sapphira was more than mere deception. Peter labeled this transgression as "testing the Spirit of the Lord." This language alludes to Old Testament stories of God's people testing him in the wilderness with arrogance, pride, haughtiness and contempt. "The sin of 'testing' the Spirit of the Lord picks up the notion of testing the Lord, which was the sin of Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 17:2; Deut. 6:16; Ps. 78:18; cf. Luke 4:12/Matt. 4:7). The culprit knows that God has issued some command and disobeys it to see if God was really serious about it and will react or not (cf. Acts 15:10)" (I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 554). Much of the wilderness "testing" from the people of God was related to leadership. The people challenged Moses and were thus "testing" the Lord. Ananias' deceitful failure to disclose full details of his faux generosity may have elevated him into a potential realm of early church leadership that he did not deserve. Barnabas' generosity most likely led to his future ministry in the church. Ananias and Sapphira may have coveted more than Barnabas' fame. They may have fraudulently attempted to buy positions of leadership in the church through suspect generosity. Such brazen hypocrisy ultimately "tested" God himself.

God's reaction to Ananias and Sapphira's presumption was swift. Peter condemned the actions of this duplicitous duo but issued no command or curse on them. Both Ananias and Sapphira fell down after Peter's charge. The reader assumes that God must have stricken both of these transgressors with death as a judgment for their sin. Twice Luke records that "great fear" came upon those who witnessed the demise of this crafty couple (Acts 5:5, 11). The power of God was evident in the witness and wonder of the Apostles and in the life of holiness among those baptized in Jesus' name. Following the resurrected Jesus was following Almighty God who could raise up the crippled (Acts 4:10) and strike down the charlatan (Acts 5:5, 10). We do well to remember that God, though benevolent, is also frightening when crossed or cheated.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 2 **kept** “Same [word] used for Achan’s act in holding the spoil in Jericho (Josh. 7:1). It is a verb tied to financial fraud (2 Macc. 4:32; Josephus, Ant. 4.8.29 §274). Greek texts use the term in a similar manner (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 6.234). The middle voice is an indirect reflexive: ‘He kept it for himself.’ The term for ‘proceeds,’ matches Acts 4:34. The narration makes clear that this is done with joint knowledge. Sapphira is an enabler for Ananias. ... Later verses (Acts 5:3–4) make clear that they could have honestly kept back these proceeds or a portion of them, but this is not what they have done” (Darrell L Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT, 221). Same word used in v. 3.

v. 3 **lie** “Peter’s second (implied) question addresses Ananias’s attempt to deceive the apostles by lying about the price that he had received from the sale of the property and about the amount he was making available to the community. Peter emphasizes that lying to the community of believers is always lying to the Holy Spirit, who is God’s presence in the community. The notion that one could deceive the Holy Spirit is ludicrous—nobody can deceive the God’s Spirit, since the almighty and omniscient God cannot be manipulated” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 284).

v. 3 **Spirit** “A direct statement of deity is found in the well-known passage in Acts 5 where Peter used ‘God’ and ‘the Holy Spirit’ interchangeably (5:3–4). The Holy Spirit’s coming was an act of sending by the risen Son (2:33). ... The Holy Spirit is said to have anointed the Lord during His ministry on earth (10:38). ... [In Acts] the Spirit baptized (1:5; 11:15–16); the purpose of this ministry was to form the body of Christ. The Spirit governed the early church (13:2–4) and He filled the workers for witness (1:8; 2:4; 4:31; 5:32; 9:11–20). That this should be the case was the normal expectation of the church (6:3–5; 11:24). The Spirit also led the early church leaders. Outstanding illustrations of this are Philip (8:26–30), Peter (10:19–11:18), Paul (16:7; 20:23; 21:4, 11), Agabus (11:28), and other prophets (21:4)” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 103).

v. 4 **contrived** “Literally ‘to place in the heart, or mind,’ and ‘to place in the spirit, or mind’ to engage in the process of deciding—‘to make up one’s mind, to decide’” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 358).

v. 4 **heart** “Peter’s final question essentially repeats the first question: How could Ananias allow his heart to plan such deceit? While the first question ascribes the deception to Satan, the last question asserts the personal culpability of Ananias. This corresponds to

Paul’s understanding of sin: while sin is the result of Adam’s fall in the past, controlling the behavior of all human beings (Rom 5:12–21; 7:7–24), every human being is personally responsible for his or her sinful actions (Rom 1:18–3:20)” (Schnabel, 284).

v. 4 **disposal** “Peter emphasizes the right of ownership that Ananias and his wife had of the property and still had over the proceeds of the sale, even after they had sold it. This suggests that the surrender of property or money was voluntary in the early community. ... The spontaneous decision to give it up to the community was that of Ananias and Sapphira, but their ‘lie’ consists in the retention of part of the proceeds, when it was customary to give up all of the proceeds and they are believed to be conforming to such a custom. Their retention of part of the proceeds was thus hypocritical” (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible, 323).

v. 9 **test** “Peter stated earlier that the deception was a lie against the Holy Spirit (v. 3), he calls it here ‘testing’ the Spirit. The use of this verb reminds biblically literate readers of the people of Israel in the wilderness who on several occasions ‘tested’ God through rebellion and apostasy, with dire results. Peter asserts that the couple’s sin was not only deception, perhaps based on the selfish desire to increase their prestige and standing in the congregation, but arrogance as well. They believed that they could behave in a manner clearly not sanctioned by God and get away with it” (Schnabel, 287).

v. 11 **fear** “‘Great fear,’ is repeated from v. 5 (and cf. 2:43) and again contrasts with the ‘great grace’ the believers experienced in their community life (4:33). Such fear would arise from two deaths within a short period, especially in the knowledge that they had conspired to deceive the community. This is fear of God, not of the apostles or the community, and is experienced by the believers—‘the whole congregation’—as well as outsiders—‘all who heard.’ ‘All who heard’ now includes Luke’s readers as they hear the story; Luke seeks to inculcate holy fear, which is a realistic and humble assessment of the place and power of God (through the Spirit) and the word in the community” (Steve Walton, *Acts 1–9:42*, vol. 37A, Word Biblical Commentary, 363).

v. 11 **church** “[Church/*ekklesia*] is the first of twenty-three references in Acts. ... Such a general usage reflects a rendering of the Hebrew *qāhāl* [congregation/gathering]. The other Greek term rendering this Hebrew term is *synagōgē*, but it is used only of the synagogue in the NT. An identifiable religious community is emerging from those who have responded to Jesus, those who earlier were called brethren (1:15) and believers (2:44; 4:32). Later in Acts, members of this group are called disciples (6:1), the saints of the Lord (9:13), and Christians (11:26).” (Bock, 227).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Do not offend God through your offense of others; there may be grave consequences.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

With five kids, we've had ample opportunity to learn various lying styles. In no order, one child's voice goes up an octave or two when the truth is stretched. Another does this thing with their lips and chin that gives them away every time. Another grins really big and looks a little shifty. One lies by omission, so you have to ask a lot of very specific questions. And lastly, a big sigh with a look that says, "You're stupid," will always cause me to probe further to find the truth. Kids are going to lie. They're going to test this boundary to see what they can get away with. We can disciple them through this in two ways. First of all, know your kids. Don't be a busy task-master who only sees their child as an additional person to do chores around the house. Spend time really getting to know them. Go outside and play frisbee. Watch and talk through their favorite show. Play board games. (That'll be a dead giveaway to lying and cheating personality styles!) Your kids are part of your family; enjoy getting to know them. Secondly, be an approachable parent. Do you want your kids to run from you or run to you when they're in trouble? If you find yourself constantly ordering your kids around and yelling when they make simple mistakes, it's time to hit the reset button and make a change. Become a parent with open arms and grace coupled with consistent discipline. Your kids won't feel the urge to lie to get out of trouble when they know you're on their side. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 5:1-11

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira sell and what did they do with the money?
2. Peter said to Ananias, "You have not lied to man but to_____."
3. What happened to Ananias and Sapphira?

What Do You Think?

Why do you think they lied about the money?

What Do You Do?

Play 2 Truths & a Lie with your family or home group. Can you guess the lie?

CORE COMPETENCY: Faithfulness

I am loyal to God and others so they know they can count on me.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 6:45

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.