

Money Matters – Treasures of Your Heart

Your Image Could Be Killing You

October 11, 2020

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Scripture Reference

Acts 5:1-11

In this story, the treasure of the heart is revealed in a married couple that desired to appear more generous than they really were. They colluded and lied to Holy Spirit and the consequences were deadly.

Consider:

- Pride and self-promotion can be a deadly combination
- Trying to appear as something you are not has serious consequences
- The only example recorded in the Bible where people died directly (in the early church) involved money.

Observations – Genesis and Acts

The genesis of humanity and the genesis of the church began with money trouble:

1. In both cases people gave to God – worship
2. Genesis – one brother dies / Acts – a married couple dies
3. Genesis – sin is at the door / Acts – Satan filled the heart
4. Genesis – Cain gave the wrong offering / Acts – they gave but they lied.

Main Points - Lessons

1. Image and status can be deadly:

- a. The story illustrates a couple that tried to appear as something they were not. It seems they were more interested in the praises of people rather than the praises of God. They were willing to lie and deceive the entire church for appearances sake.
- b. Image is the false appearing - "*You can own a Louis Vuitton purse and not have a dollar in it.*"
~ Dr Tony Soldano
- c. Trying to impress people can be deadly
- d. Be who you are and be content with what you possess
- e. Image is rooted in pride – pride goes before a fall
- f. The seed of Satan is PRIDE – the seed of God is generosity
- g. Pride is a like a virus. Consider:
 - i. Better to be lowly in spirit (Proverbs 16:19)
 - ii. Do not be conceited (Romans 12:16)
 - iii. God humbles the proud (Isaiah 13:11, Daniel 4:37)
 - iv. God marks the proud mockers (Proverbs 3:34)
 - v. God opposes the proud (James 4:6, 1Peter 5:5)
 - vi. The Lord detests pride (Proverbs 8:13, 16:5)

- vii. Love is not proud (1Corinthians 13:4)
- viii. Pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18, 18:12)
- ix. Pride is sinful (Proverbs 21:4)
- x. In contrast to pride, God requires humility. *“Humility is often linked to weakness in man’s eyes but really is grounded in great strength from God’s perspective. To be humble and genuinely not interested in self-promotion but in allowing God’s promotion, is sadly lacking in many Christian circles today. The world says we must fight for our rights and stick up for ourselves but if we dare to let God take charge, it is an ease to us and a testimony of his work of character within us. Humility is not having the notion that we are just a worthless worm nor is it that we have done it all on our own and are this self-made man. Humility is saying and being who God says we are.”* ~ unknown

Act 5:1-2

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- Do not lie with and for your spouse
- They wanted to appear more generous than they really were
- Their lie involved the worship and devotion that belonged to God.

2. Do not have a spiritual heart attack:

- a. In the story, the land and the money seem to be of a secondary concern to God and to the devil. For God, it came down to the motive as to why they were seeding the money. The cost of the land and the amount of money that was handed in was of little consequence to God.
- b. For the devil - he needed an entry point; a place where he could put his seed - the seed of pride. This would give him legal access into the new movement within these brand-new believers.

Act 5:3

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"

- Peters' question implied that they had given Satan permission to operate and fill their hearts.
 - Satan filled their heart, but they agreed to the plot - this made them responsible
- Their sin was lying to the Holy Ghost - Peter discerned that they were lying
 - Holy Ghost is the gentlest of the Trinity/Godhead and yet He pronounced judgement
- Definition - Filled: *to cram in until you must bend down*
 - play-ro'-o - From G4134; to make replete, that is, (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction)

Act 5:4

While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

- The lie outweighed the fact that they gave a portion to God
- When we deal with spiritual leadership, we are dealing with God
- God takes it personal when we lie to Him – better not to make a vow and break it
- Conceived and lied – when we conceive evil it usually leads to lies.

3. God sees and knows it all – DO NOT test Him

Act 5:9-10

⁹Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

They tested the Spirit of God:

- Test – to tempt to put Him to a trial
- To endeavor if a thing is possible or how one will react.

Matthew 4:7

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.' "

Act 5:5-8

⁵Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. ⁷Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

- Peter gave her the opportunity to operate in integrity and repent. God will always provide a way to do the right thing, even when a person starts wrong
- Tell the truth, always!
- After their death:
 - Fear fell on the believers
 - Miracles broke out.

4. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing:

- a. Humility and secrecy - as a general rule, the follower of Christ should practice giving in a manner that is secret and not for public display or fame.
 - i. God honours and prefers those that give out of:
 1. Generosity
 2. A Humble heart
 3. A grateful disposition
 4. Sacrificially, in other words, the giver is not pressed or coerced.

Matthew 6:3-4

³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Psychologist Larry Crabb observes that many of us think of God as, "an especially attentive waiter." When we get good service from Him, we give Him a nice tip of praise. When we do not get what we want, we complain.

The Power of Three

- 1) Understand that you are a steward and not an owner
- 2) Get your finances and giving right with God – follow Biblical principles
- 3) Practice generosity.

Group Questions

- 1) List ways in which we give Satan permission to work in our lives.
- 2) Describe some ways in which you have tried to be someone you are not.
- 3) Give some real-life examples of people you know that are humble and people you know that are proud.
- 4) Why do you think that the Holy Spirit acted so swiftly and harshly in the story?
- 5) Give an example of how you obeyed God in giving and how it impacted others.
- 6) Jesus said we should give secretly. Did Barnabas constrict the Word of the Lord by giving publicly in Acts 4?
- 7) Why is God so stern and so serious about pride?
- 8) Why did Peter say, *“You have not lied to men but to God”*, since they were speaking to Peter?