

Marriage Series #5 - Anaias & Sapphira

by Don McClure

The sermon teaches that deception, hypocrisy, and carnality are the root causes of every marriage breakup, and that truth is essential in building strong relationships, as seen in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 47:32

Scripture: Acts 4:32, Acts 4:34, 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Topics: "Honest Relationships", "Christian Community"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of truth in relationships and the need for individuals to be honest with themselves and with God. The speaker shares a personal experience as a police chaplain, highlighting the discouragement faced by police officers. The sermon also references Acts chapter 4, where believers were united in heart and soul, sharing their possessions and meeting each other's needs. However, the speaker acknowledges that this level of communal living did not last long and that the Bible teaches the importance of work and self-sufficiency.

Transcript

Acts chapter 5, perhaps one of the most unlikely studies that you're ever going to come across for marriage, but there's some great lessons in it. But a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, and 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. 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? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You've not lied to men, but to God.

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, tell me, whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, yes, for so much. Then 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.

And immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in, found her dead, and carried her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

You know, I don't know how often it is, I hear people comment on the church today, and we have this great longing oftentimes. Boy, wouldn't it be wonderful if the church was as good as it was in the beginning. You know, if the power of God was at work in the church today, as powerfully as it was at work in the church when the church was just starting, these great and glorious and powerful and wonderful things.

And I sometimes wonder whether we'd like him that powerful, because when he comes in power, he comes in equal power all the way across the board. We want, of course, when we're thinking of power in that way, we're thinking of power in terms of healing. We're thinking in power of raising from the dead.

We're thinking in power of great miracles and signs and awesome things that we'd just love to see more and more of. But I think we also, if we're going to pray that way, we ought to also be ones that would realize, well, if he's going to come, we don't get to pick the areas he's going to be in power in. We don't get to pick the areas he's going to work, and he's going to, he's just going to be there, and he's going to call them as he sees them.

And here we have one of those times to where the church, as this whole event happened, it's this great fear came upon them all. When they, the church watching this whole scene, it was one that was an awesome sight, no doubt. Rather brutal, too, I guess you could say.

But at the same time, the Lord wanted a pure church, and it cost a few lives to keep it pure, but he did. But at any rate, tonight I want to look at Ananias and Sapphira, this couple. And I just called it myself, the anatomy of a divorce.

And this was quite a divorce, too, I guess you could say, the way it all happened here. But the thing is, is looking at this marriage. Any time a marriage fails, and this certainly failed, didn't it? But any time it fails, there are some things that I think are quite common in every failed relationship.

And virtually all relationships, when they fail, oftentimes have these attributes in them. But particularly looking at this couple. It starts, first of all, with just spiritual deception, where somebody is just starting right out, you know, in the forefront of the whole relationship as they're doing it, where they've separated themselves from truth.

And just to set the scene here a little bit, in the previous chapter, we're actually going back to Acts chapter 2, is where the church was really birthed wonderfully, when the Spirit of God, Pentecost, came in great power. But here as the church was moving, and as the church was growing, it was a wonderful thing. There was new life, filled with these people just born again, just coming into a relationship with Christ, and so powerful, and so thrilled, and so wonderful it was.

The joy of their sins forgiven, and their lives, they're all of them, they're just all starting all over again, and what a thrill it had to be. And it tells us in Acts chapter 4, in the previous chapter, and it's in verse 32, it says, Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. Needed anyone say that any of the things that he possessed were his own, but they had all things in common? And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked, for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold. They laid them at the apostles' feet, and they distributed to each one as anyone had a need. And Joseph, who is also called Barnabas by the apostles, which is translated the son of encouragement, a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, bought the money, laid it at the apostles' feet.

And here we have at the scene of what's happened here, is that the church has just been born, and powerful and wonderful things are happening, and the people were just moved to share things in common. Doesn't say God led them to do it, doesn't say that there was any edict in it to where people were to go out and just sell everything, and to give it all to one another, to anyone that had need. There was no biblical injunction to do it, there was nothing coming from the auspices of the apostles exhorting them to do it, but it was a wonderful thing that was happening though.

People I'm sure just moved out of love, moved by this whole new family, this whole new body, and just wanting to see it start, seeing the needs that people had in a wonderful way, they just went out and began to do this. Again, not told to do it, but God blessed their love, God blessed the act in a wonderful way. It's a practice that didn't last for very long, and nor is there any exhortation they should have brought it back, and so I think it's one of those you just kind of have to look at and say it's wonderful.

But it doesn't say it was sin to do it, or sin when they stopped it. It was just a wonderful thing that happened within their own heart. But through the processes of this whole thing somehow another spiritual leadership was coming out of it.

People were looking and seeing those that they would choose to lead. In the last verse of the previous chapter we have, there were Barnabas who ended up and went on from here to be a great and notable spiritual leader and great power was in his life. And as they're just starting to recognize new leadership, new apostles, as the church is being born, it's like spirituality is being defined by manner of life for them in a wonderful way.

And here Barnabas comes, and he takes all that he has, and he sells it, gives it all, you know, lays at the apostles' feet, and on he goes. As I said, this didn't last for long. Later on, the Bible goes on to teach us if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat.

The Bible has an injunction to say, well, it's wonderful maybe to have a time of mercy and grace and when there's a need, but as far as the basis of it, you don't want to live this way. You don't want to just constantly, because immediately they recognize perhaps, well, these people that do work and do earn and do have, and then others may just sit and just do nothing and just continue to say, hey, this Christian life's a great place. I'm going to stay here and just move in people's houses and enjoy everything they've got and not learn responsibility.

Later on, Paul gives the exhortation if a man doesn't provide for his family, he's worse than an infidel. That's quite an exhortation when you stop to think of it, and to actually look, most people would almost question that verse, say, wait a minute. It's, you know, and a lot of wives would probably say, well, hey, I think I'd rather that my husband can't provide, than he go out and commit infidelity and or adultery in the marriage, but as far as God's concerned, he looks and he teaches later on that he wants to put square on a man and on a father's shoulders the great responsibility that he has to provide for his family.

It's something to where, and he looks at it and he says, actually, if a man doesn't provide, it's worse than infidelity.

Infidelity is a natural sin, in the sense, I mean, a natural person, I mean, in their own flesh can do it, and fail, and it's wrong, and it's terrible, and it has great pain and grief that can go with it, but to not to provide is almost, it's a sin against nature, almost, just, I mean, even in the animal world, when they're, I mean, how that an animal cares for its young, and watches over it, and will always see to it that it's taken care of, all the way to the, you know, the loss even of its own life, no matter how desperate things can be, and it's almost like not providing for a family, it's a sin against nature, it's a sin, it's terrible, and it's something that somebody has to look at the great personal responsibility and say, I'm going to care for things, and I know today with a lot

of things in what the homeless world, and that there's, I'm sure, legitimate circumstances, but I think sometimes there's an awful lot of people that are in that world, that the homeless is too dignified of a word, sometimes, for me, I want to look and have compassion, and show mercy, and care for people, but anyway, I'm getting sidetracked, but the early church, though, it was, as it's happening, this wonderful love that happened, this wonderful self-denial that was coming, people were looking for real love, and they were finding it, it's the body of Christ that's being born, they're coming, they're watching, and they're caring, and they're helping each other, and it's like they're all getting a fresh start in life, all together, and they're just distributing amongst one another, and as

I said, Barnabas, he came in the previous chapter, he laid it all down, became a recognized leader, and no doubt as the church looked at this, and they watched people that came and did this, and there, no doubt, as Barnabas came, as the chapter ended up, and how the church had to just look and be so touched, and to look there, and Barnabas, just for his great love for the Lord, as great as there even his name means, son of encouragement, or son of consolation, this great compassion he had, I just care for people, he was obviously, even by his very name, so moved to say, I must do this, I want to give this, he had no other motive but the purest and the highest, no doubt, but he came and he just gave it, and as he did that, no doubt, the church looked there and said, wow, look at this, to

be able to give, to be able to be so free from the ownership of possessions, and just be able to spend your life saving and having, and then just to be able to come and just lay it down, what a wonderful thing, they may have looked at and thought about, I don't know, but with that just being the preceding event to Ananias and Sapphira, all we know is, is that perhaps they were really touched by this, and they may be desiring, you know, spiritual recognition, and maybe they could emerge into leadership, they would do some great thing, and the church would look at them and say, oh Ananias, oh Sapphira, you must come here too, you've got to help us, you, you were wonderful leaders, oh, that you would do it, but the thing about them is, it's quite obvious that they did it through complete

deception, they lied about the whole way that they went through it, it was hypocrisy, and they conspired together to do this, and it's something in looking at it, it's obviously extremely carnal, it's interesting, carnality to me, it has three ways that I can be carnal, I can have an objective out there, I can have a goal, and the goal that I can have can be carnal, it can be selfish, it can be for my own objectives, and you can be carnal, even though I, or it can be, I can have a very spiritual objective out there, I can have a very godly thing, something that's really for heaven, it's for the kingdom of God, it's for his glory, it's for the most wonderful of things, but I want to achieve it in my own strength, I don't know about the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, so I go to try to

do a godly thing with a carnal strength, and then I'm carnal, or the motive that it starts with in my own heart, of what it's, you know, they can either start with me, end with me, or use me anywhere, the other two can be quite spiritual, all you have to do is just have me saying here, it can be a good godly motive, it can be a glorious thing at the end, but just my strength will do it, that's carnal, you can have a great motive, you can have a great power of the Holy Spirit, but it can all be ultimately for my glory, that's any of it, any one of those three, you've got carnality, you've got hypocrisy, you've got sin, and here we have this couple, that in their relationship, as they're looking at their own marriage, it's this type of deception, as they're lying to God, they willfully,

both of them jointly, they lied to God, and that's the root of every marriage breakup, and you'll never really find to me a marriage breakup, where at least one of them in the relationship is not a deceiver, I've hardly ever seen anything that you can't, when you know much at all about it, that you won't look back and realize the deception when it comes to the surface, and then of course, whether it's a marriage breakup, a relationship of any form, a church breakup, usually when it happens, there's carnality, there's hypocrisy, there's deception in it somewhere, and a lot of marriages, unfortunately, they actually begin with deception, our whole dating system, to me in the United States, in our country, it's quite, it's tremendously deceiving, it's terribly deceiving, you look at two

people, here they are, that we're talking about love, we're talking about building a home, and a marriage, and a family, and having children, and producing future generations, and the seriousness of the whole thing, and yet, like the old statement goes, all's fair in love and war, and it sure seems to be, you know, when people are dating, on how they oftentimes start off, deceiving, the way that they go out, and the way that they meet, the way they talk, he, you know, and as they start sharing their hearts, what they really want in life, you know, or something, he said, well, what I really want, is I just want to settle down, I just want to settle down and be a husband, and I just want to be a father, I just want to have some children, I just want to live for, you know, all the right

things, and the right motives, and I'm tired of running around with the boys, I'm tired of being irresponsible, and I'm tired, and of course, she's sitting there listening to this, wow, what a great guy, that's exactly what I'm looking for, oh, I mean, he just, yeah, he says to me, just not much, all I, you know, just want to settle down, have a few hundred acres, build a little ranch on it, bring the little woman into it, or whatever, you know, and how they'll paint this picture of life, and on how, and almost the subtleties of it, is boy, whoever it is, that ever, the Lord ever gets to have him, boy, is she going to be the luckiest thing in the world, and then, of course, when she talks, you know, and she shares, well, all I really want to do, is be a wife, and to be a mother, and just

have a home, and just, I just, I'm just, to be able to take a man, and just to love him, and to serve him, I want to cook for a man, I want to clean his house, I want to wash his socks, I want, you know, her stuff, I mean, you listen to some of these people, and on how, I just, I just want to set up a little house, a little, you know, home for him to come home to, and us to have children, he's listening to her, and it sounds fine, but until you think, hey, these two people might really be responding to what they're saying, they might really be, I mean, they're building a life this way, in a sense, they're really actually thinking of responding, in the meantime, they're lying, their priorities really aren't there, oftentimes, at all, as yet, you know, they play a shell game with each

other, a lot of times, if you, you know, and, and what they're really all about, and how it is, and then, of course, what happens, is this couple gets married, and she's, you know, they're thinking, well, where's the

money, you know, and he said, well, where's the cooking, you know, well, where's, well, you got to give me the money, you find the pup, so I can hire the cook, I didn't say, I would actually cook, I just said, I would make sure the cooking gets done, and I know a good maid, you know, or something, and the next thing you know, you got two people that, with the have-truths, and the way that they built the relationship, they're in trouble, they're in terrible trouble, because they just allowed deception to get in, and be a part of their relationship, and there's lies, there's,

there's no other way to look at it, Peter, here he looked in, in a lot of people today, in the church, so often today, if somebody did what Ananias and Sapphira did, the church would usually look, and say, well, hey, you can tell me you're giving me everything, you can tell me anything, I'll just take it on any terms, you know, whatever it is that we can get, we'll take it, and it's none of our business, whether you gave us everything, it's more than, you know, I wish, who are we to complain, who are we to question, whether you gave us 50%, 80%, you know, 20% of the sale of the property, or whatever, they just, we'll just, we're just glad to have it, we can sure use it, but here Peter looked there, and he realized, wait a minute, we're building here, we're building a marriage right here,

we're building the church right here, we're building the kingdom of heaven right here, we're building on eternity right here, we're building something that Jesus is the chief cornerstone of it, who said, I am truth, he is, you know, I am all truth, complete truth, I speak truth, live truth, share truth, preach truth, and it's absolute truth, there's no shadow of turning in him, and he looks there at his church, at his body, he looks there at a marriage, he looks at a home, and truth must be there, and here Peter, he looked there, and he just realized, wait a minute, your marriage isn't going to go any place at all, if you're going to lie like this, we can't have this happen within the church, if we would, if here, Peter would have let this thing go, the disaster of what would have

happened, and here it's something that when you look at them, of course, Anna and I, Sapphira, they weren't only lying to God, they weren't only lying to the rest of the church, they were deceiving each other as well, nobody just comes and does a thing like this without both of them already being people that deceive each other, and that's the thing that happens, when somebody decides it's that in some area of life, deception is okay, a half-truth is okay, when they find in, you know, in some areas that they don't need to be fully honest about this, after all, there's no real benefit in it at all, when we get thinking like that, we're in trouble, and we live in a world today, where even the church, most truth is relative truth, it's just the truth that you got to tell, it's the truth that

just kind of seems you got to do, but if they, but the whole world around us today, truth is relative, there isn't any absolutes as far as even is any part of the world is concerned, everything is corrupted, governments, great governments, our government, I think one of the greatest governments that's ever been on the planet, I don't care to judge it, I'm not called to judge it, but at the same time, when you do look, and you watch the way the government, you look at the way our senate, you look at the way the house of representatives, you look at the scandals and the things that go on, you know, by people, you know, brought into office, governors, you look senators, you look at mayors, you look at people there to where you can, you look at them and you realize truth is not even part of

their value system any longer, truth doesn't even really weigh, it weighs very little in the whole decision-making process, it isn't truth, it isn't what is right, it isn't what is honest, that's old-fashioned, it's what's going to get the job done, what's going to get us from here to there, period, how can we resolve this problem and make this thing work over here, we don't care if it's true, we don't care if it's a lie, we don't

care if it's right or wrong, does it work, and that's, I mean, when you look at a whole nation, when you look at, I mean, when you look at most of the governments of the world, you go down to South America and, you know, in most of the governments there, you ask for truth, it's hilarious, I mean, there isn't even the plan, they don't even say, I'm going to tell

the people the truth, that's, we're going to think truth, this last week a senator up in Oregon, I was reading in the newspaper, I mean, they wanted to get the way he ran for office and all his lies that he did before he got in and there was all this truth, all these things that he lied to the whole state to get their vote about and said that nothing happened like they're all saying it happened after the election, it all comes out and he lied, he got all the proof in all the world, it was all lies, they went before the senate hearing committee and, a senate committee there this last week, maybe you read about it, you know, and said, hey, we think this guy shouldn't be in office, he's a liar, well, then on that basis, it's interesting, our own senate sat there as if to say, hey, look, if

we're going to throw this guy out of office for a simple thing like lying, we wouldn't have a government left, I mean, you know, I mean, you know, we can't, what are we supposed to do, fold up or, I mean, then that didn't cross their mind, maybe we should start telling the truth, no, we can't do that, too late for that, but it's, but it's something to where you look at the whole of the country, we don't even think in terms of honesty, of truth, you look at business fraud, you look at Wall Street, you look at corporations on how that they, that they build themselves up on deceptive practices and financial practices and accounting systems to make themselves look good for mergers, and they can prove that time and time again, they're deceptive, they're lying, they present themselves better

than they actually are in order to sell their stock and make some money in the short term, and then on the whole situation goes again and again, the athletic world, you look at it, you know, I mean, now we don't even know whether it's an athlete hardly long anymore, is that really him, you know, or is it steroids, you know, I mean, is there, what's the guy, you know, how many needles has he had in him, and what have they done to make this guy, because we get so many drugs out here now, we get so many things you can put in a human system that give it phenomenal strength, and give it superhuman capacities.

I remember one time when I was a police chaplain down in Southern California, got involved in a wrestling match, kind of, with a guy that was on PCP, and there's a few officers, and we're trying to hold this guy down, and the strength that this guy had, I mean, any one of us on any day of the week could have been able to take care of him, I think, but this guy with whatever it was that he had in his system, he could take three of us who didn't have it in our system, and handle us, almost handle us, and it was scary, but it's just, it's deception, and it's all the way through our whole world, we live in it, and it's so tragic that many of us don't even think about it any longer.

Many of us, it's so sad, places may be in companies and businesses, reputable businesses, yet the corruption that goes on within it, and people that'll go sell a product, and they know right out front, they're not going to service it, they're not going to repair it, they'll give you a 99-year guarantee, there'll be something that, boy, this thing breaks down, here's our 800 number, and it's, then when you read the print, it's one 800 sucker, you know, is the number for it, you know, because they're gone, and they knew it, they set up their whole system right from the front, absolute fraud, and that's the world which we live in, and in the midst of this thing, we're trying to build marriages, we're growing up in a world, and bringing our children up in a world where truth is relative, where honesty, integrity, ethics, they're historical, you know, relics that used to work, but aren't necessary any longer, and then we try to build a marriage, and where

you've got two people that look at each other, and tell each other the truth, truth about who they are as a human being, truth of where their life is, what their relationship with God is, where they really want to go, what they really want to do, what the true heart, and thought, and motives of their life really are, and when you've never practiced it, it's in any other realm, it's scary. I remember when I used to ride with the, as a police chaplain with the police, and I tell you, for those of you that are police officers, I mean, it's a discouraging world, I couldn't believe, I mean, you'd ride with these people all day, and, you know, with these cops, and hear these guys, virtually every single person you confronted, everyone that you got called into, every, I mean, almost 99% of them, once in a while, you know, you got to where somebody'd tell you the truth, but most everybody had a story, had an explanation. You could pull over people that were upstanding people in the city, you could pull over people that were, you know, on major, you know, things in the city, and all they did was want to say, hey, I'm related to so-and-so, and so-and-so, and therefore, you better not give me a ticket.

They didn't quite say it that way, it was more sophisticated than that, or they were somebody here or there, but it's just, maybe I did it, maybe I didn't, but I don't want to talk about it, but don't bother me, and almost, you'd have people that would, you know, rarely, I don't know if I ever rode with a cop, when he pulled somebody over for speeding, and the person said, yes. Well, I was really going fast, wasn't I? You know, you never, you'd pull somebody over, and they, and they, it was, I could, all the stories that I used to think of using, when I, because I, and I, well, I did use some of them when I was a kid, but I mean, my speedometer's not working right, or, oh, we put new tires on it, and it hasn't been accurate, or, no, I could, no, you, no, are you sure? And, of course, and the person knew exactly what they're doing, and all the time, and you look at, a lot of times, people with fish, you know, on their bumper, and all sorts of even Christian testimonies around, but when it came down to it, you know, it's kind of like a man's got to do what a man's got to do, and if it means I lie, or I deceive, well, let's see, because the ends justify the means. If you ever, you know, to me, I mean, if you ever want to completely mess up a cop, if you want to just ruin his day, tell him the truth.

When he pulls you over and says, you were going 50, he says, well, I actually thought it was closer to 52. You know, the guy, the guy, don't you lie to me, you know, what'd you say? You really, you know, it, but it's, but the world, it's amazing on how just the, the, just the simple truth, and is, but without it, you can't build a relationship, and here is Peter, he's looking at this couple in their marriage, and how the two of them together, they both conspired, both antonized the fire, they came in, and they wanted to become leaders, or they want to do something, and they were willing, they gave up, who knows what percentage of it, probably a sizable percentage, and they came, and that they offered this, but they just, the sad thing, they just didn't quite have the faith to give it all. Now, they didn't have to give it all.

Peter made that quite clear. Peter said to him, and he said, when it remained, in verse 4, he says, while it remained, was it not your own after it was sold? Wasn't it still in your control? He's looking at him and says, Ananias, you didn't have to do this. There's no biblical edict, there's nothing where God says you got to go sell it all and give it all in here, but you come in here and suggested to us you've given it all.

If you'd have just come in and said, here, we sold it, we want to give half of this to the church, they'd have rejoiced. Or we want to give 20 percent, or we want to give 80, or whatever it was, and say, you know, we just, right now, we just don't have the faith, or we believe God would have us hold on to this amount. I'm sure Peter would have said, hallelujah, keep it, it's yours.

Peter made it quite clear. When, before you sold it, wasn't it all yours? After you sold it, wasn't it all in your control? You didn't have to lie. And the thing here, you know, is that they came and they just lied.

No other way to put it. It's exactly what Peter said on both occasions. And when somebody starts lying, when two people look at each other, and by the time a marriage has failed, you usually have a multitude of lies.

You usually have two people that have lied to each other so many times, they don't even know when they're lying anymore. They didn't even know when they're really telling the truth. He calls her up, says, honey, I'm going to be a little late.

Yeah, I'm here at the office, I'm going to be late, and he may be at the office a little longer, but he, but, you know, what he really wants to do is, he's going out with the guys, down in Orange County. This is a true story. Well, all my stories are, some of, not all.

I'm not going to tell you when, I repent after, no, I mean, I mean, they don't have to be true. It's just, I think they're true. But the, down in Orange County, there's a bar.

It's a thrive, it's huge, it's humongous, at two major intersections in Orange County. The name of the bar is The Office. It's what it's named.

And the parking lot for any, from five till about eight o'clock, it's just jammed. And the reason they named it there, is all these guys that call their wife, say, honey, I'm going to be at The Office. That's exactly what they did.

That's exactly why the name was. And the wife says, okay, honey, have a good time at The Office. Okay.

And he does. He goes to a bar called The Office, and it's filled, and it, because you can lie, and not really lie, supposedly. Just a little situational slip.

But here are these people, the way that they, that the games get in. The way the maneuvering is. You see couples so often, where many, many times I look at a couple where he's got a whole area of his life that's unknown to her.

He's got money over here, and he's got something over here tucked away, and you know, for his, towards his games, or you know, or cars, or toys, or sports, or something there, that he just kind of, you know, keeps that off. That's never really anything. In the meantime, she's got her little thing over there, and they both, you know, suspected, and have learned enough about each other, that she's got her little hidden, you know, pile over there, that when she says, I'm broke, I don't have anything, you know, of course, that doesn't include this.

And of course, it doesn't with him. And they've got all these things, rather than the truth. Here's what we are, here's what we're operating in.

And then when he would look and say, you know, you really, you don't have anything? Well, maybe I can get something. And then he goes over, well, let's see here, I don't really have anything either, but let me, well, I do, oh, how would he, oh, yeah, I do have, you know, okay, well, you sure you don't have anything? Yeah, I don't have anything. You know, now, I mean, we're talking marriages.

We're talking people here that say, I love you, and I trust you, and I'm going to tell you the truth. You know, it's something there to when most people, it's old English, it's not used quite as commonly anymore, but it used to be that part of a marriage ceremony is that people would say to each other, forsaking all others, I pledge thee my troth. That's old English, but the word troth means fidelity.

It's something there to where two people are looking and said, I want you to know that you, for the rest of my life, are going to come before anything and anybody else on this planet. There will never be anything more important than you. There will never be any person, any activity, anything that will ever be higher on my agenda than you.

And two people, usually when you get married in one form or another, you use words like that to where you both look at each other and say, that's so. In order for us to have a deep marriage and a strong marriage, there'll never be any secrets. There'll never be anything that we have to hide from each other.

There'll never be anything that's in my world that I can't tell you about, and I'm not going to let it be known to you. And if we're going to say that, and then we go on out from there, and then we start having to protect ourselves. One doesn't quite tell us the truth.

And rather than responding still with us, giving the truth back, we decide, well, the only way to fight a lie is to lie a little here. The only way, if they aren't being fully open and honest with me, is I need to. And they're kind of, I know they've got a little something tucked away here, so I guess I've got to tuck something away here.

One deception will be met with an equal deception. And one, you know, miss value here, or one weak priority here that he's got, you know, he's over there with the guys, all right, then I'm going to go over here and do this with the girls. He's going to waste time and money over here doing this, and then I've got the same amount of time and money over here that I can waste doing this.

And you've got two people in the most subtle and yet real of ways, they're deceiving. They're playing a game. And it's quite understandable in the world.

It's quite understandable, you know, to a worldly mind. But if two people are also in the process saying, God, we want to have a marriage. We want to have a union.

That's what the word marriage means, it means union. We want our lives to be united. Well, as soon as you take part of your life and you disunite it, you pull something over here, and then you pull something over here, the next thing you know is part of that union breaks.

And then you take another area over here, there's whether it's time or it's money or it's other priorities, and then you do it here, little by little you become little disunited. And the marriage is frayed. The marriage is weakening.

And here it's something that when you can have two people get to a place like Ananias the Fire, that the two of them walk in before God. I mean, even as young Christians, they're wanting to serve and follow Him, wanting to be of, you know, of use for the kingdom, but they come in under deception. God looks at it and He says it must die.

Now the wonderful thing to me is, I mean, here God graphically did a thing here. It couldn't be much more graphic than what He did. But it ought to be a statement to a marriage in a sense that says, God, thank

you that you don't have to kill the body today to save the marriage or to save anything or to save the church, but Lord, kill our own egos, kill our unbelief, kill our deceptive natures, kill our lies.

Help us learn to speak the truth in love and to where we're honestly doing this. And when you look at this, you know, the type of thing happening, it's a terrible thing. And here Peter finds himself looking there and realizing we can't have this in the church.

We can't have leaders like this in the church. If this is how it's going to be, they're going to lie and manipulate and deceive. It's going to be terrible because what's going to happen whenever it starts with a spiritual deception is it's going to turn into quite a spiritual decline.

Here you look at what happened here, of course, with Ananias and Sapphira. And it's interesting to me, Peter was not, he didn't toy with this at all, did he? Peter didn't look at Ananias when he came in and said, Ananias, let me talk to you for a minute. Now you're coming in here and saying, you know, that you sold it for \$1,000 and you've given us \$500.

And, or I mean, you came in here and you told us you sold it for \$1,000, you've given us \$1,000. But, you know, I've been praying and the Holy Spirit has got this figure in me that you sold it for \$2,000. You know, maybe I'm wrong.

Would you go pray about this? Because, man, I'm real confused over this. Ananias, I mean, he didn't sit there and kind of help him out, kind of say, hey, maybe you need to pray, maybe you need to repent. Maybe you need to get some things right here.

But no, Peter just said, he looked at him and said, Satan, the devil has filled your heart. Ananias, you've lied, not to men. You've lied to God.

And just like that, I don't know whether Peter expected this. Peter just spoke the truth, probably in love. I don't know.

But all I know is Peter looked there and he says, everything I know, if we're going to build a church and we're going to build marriages and families, this type of thing can't be paraded about. And he looked at him and he spoke. And there the next thing you know, Ananias dropped.

I imagine everybody in the place looked at each other and, is he dead? You know, I mean, like, oh no, you know, sort of a thing. We're usually in the other end of the business, raising them up, you know, sort of a thing. We're usually here to fix them, not to kill them.

And here they're looking in, but God did say a thing that was so powerful and so sovereign, they all just stood back from it. They all just stood back in amazement, realized God has judged. God has looked and said, this can't be a part of a healthy church and of a healthy marriage.

And then when three, so they go bury him. Three hours later, I mean, they didn't even invite poor, you know, Sapphira to the funeral. They just go out and bury her husband.

She comes walking in, you know, from probably chopping, I suppose. I don't know where she was. But she came in from wherever she was and she says, hi, you know, and doesn't know a thing about it.

The place was probably dead silent, probably looking, oh, you know, and Peter, you know, and he didn't look at her and say, Sapphira, we just had a real sad thing happen here. And Ananias came in and told me

he'd sold it and gave us all this. And I think he lied because he died.

And maybe you'd like to tell me how you feel about this, you know, or something. He just looked, he set her up. He looked right at her and he says, did, he says to her, he says, tell me what you sold the land.

Did you sell it for so much? She says, yeah. And then he looks at her and he says, you've agreed together. You're both liars.

You're both corrupt. You're both wanting to build the church like you built your marriage on deception and on lies. And the next thing you know, here is something to wear down, you know, and immediately she falls and dead as can be, of course.

But the thing to me that is so, I think, tragic about this whole thing is that it seems like what happens in the church is that so goes the marriage, so goes the church. If marriages are built on deception or if marriages, you know, are the real issue is the world and money or whatever it was, the same thing with Ananias, Sapphira, that if that's something that it gets into leadership, toward the motive of leadership, the reason for what is there is it's saving or it's building or it's having this and wanting that while and it kind of preaches the gospel on the side, but it has another thing. It's terrible what could happen.

But the thing here is like Peter's just looking and saying, hey, no, no. He looks at Ananias, he looks at Sapphira as if to say, not here. And it's a, it's ever so subtle.

Most marriages, and I'm sure that you, we've all tragically in our lives watched a number of marriages fail, haven't we? But when you look at them, it usually isn't one thing. How many of you ever seen one thing? You don't raise your hand, but I mean destroy marriage. I don't think I ever have.

I've seen many. It's usually just to where two people, they start off and they were once united and then just a little here and a little twig and a little twig and, you know, a little part of the the fabric of their marriage, you know, the marriage gets frayed and it gets frayed and it gets frayed. And the next thing you know, there's deception and poor priorities, and then they're covering up for it.

And then in it, they're one day, they look at each other and they realize, I don't trust anything you say. I don't, I don't believe anything you do. I don't believe anything you do.

I don't think I know you. And little by little, this marriage that once came together, and then little by little, they pulled it all back apart and they look at each other and they've deceived ever so subtly, but ever so constantly, that one day they have nothing. And what a simple and yet profound thing it is that when somebody in their marriage, they just learn, God, I want to tell the truth.

That the whole thing is I want somebody I, in truth, can give my life to. I can tell them who I really am and what I'm really dealing with and where I'm really going and what I'm all about. And because when you've got two people that do that and they're convinced that they're going to keep themselves together, they got a wonderful thing.

But when they get there to where they're going to tear it apart and have truths and not full honesty, it's just a question of time to one day they look at each other and say, who are you? I don't know you. And off they go. But the simple thing, the Bible says, speak the truth in love.

Simple lesson. Father, we thank you for your word. And Lord, we ask that whether it's building a marriage, building relationships, building a fellowship, building a business, building a church, whatever it is, Lord, that you would give us the ability to speak the truth.

Lord, that we would be ones that we love the truth. We're not afraid of the truth because, Lord, we have a greater truth than all of our weaknesses, even in our deceptions. And that is, Jesus, you come and you forgive and you cleanse.

How grateful we are, Lord, that when we come to you, we can start fresh. Lord, I pray for each marriage and our whole fellowship, that, Lord, that where there's deception, where people can't or won't tell the truth, Lord, that you would just break through. They could look at each other, and so I want to tell you the truth.

I want to ask you to forgive me. In little ways, I've kept part of my life here and part of it there. And, Lord, that you could just begin to heal as they could look at each other and say, so that's it.

I knew something was wrong. Of course, I forgive you. Thank you for trusting me.

Thank you for telling me, Lord, that a marriage can get strong and a marriage can become deep and rich and united. So many times couples aren't together. They're not close, and they don't know why, because they won't come out with it.

They're afraid if they do come out, it'll only push them away. Lord, teach us that's not so. That if we come and we confess the truth, if we come and we trust each other with our lives, would you forgive me? Lord, then is when you can truly work, and you can pour your glory into it, your heart into it, and your strength into it, and make it wonderful.

So, Father, teach us these simple truths that your word has to strengthen our relationships in life. For, Father, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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