



## GROW AT HOME

## DAY 43

## READ

## ACTS 5

## FOCUS

<sup>1</sup> NOW A MAN NAMED ANANIAS, TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE SAPPHIRA, ALSO SOLD A PIECE OF PROPERTY. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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? <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> WHEN ANANIAS HEARD THIS, HE FELL DOWN AND DIED. AND GREAT FEAR SEIZED ALL WHO HEARD WHAT HAD HAPPENED. <sup>6</sup> THEN SOME YOUNG MEN CAME FORWARD, WRAPPED UP HIS BODY, AND CARRIED HIM OUT AND BURIED HIM. <sup>7</sup> ABOUT THREE HOURS LATER HIS WIFE CAME IN, NOT KNOWING WHAT HAD HAPPENED. <sup>8</sup> PETER ASKED HER, "TELL ME, IS THIS THE PRICE YOU AND ANANIAS GOT FOR THE LAND?" "YES," SHE SAID, "THAT IS THE PRICE." <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> GREAT FEAR SEIZED THE WHOLE CHURCH AND ALL WHO HEARD ABOUT THESE EVENTS.

## REFLECTION from PASTOR MATT CIANFRANI

My first thought in reading this is, "I am so glad this doesn't happen today because cemeteries would be full." Dark I know, but let me explain what is really going on in this passage. God had given Peter a supernatural knowledge of what Ananias and Sapphira had done: they sold some property and behaved as if they had given all of their earnings to the church. At first glance it doesn't seem that big of a deal. It is their money, they can do what they want with it right? The answer to that question is yes...if; if they were honest about what they were giving and what they were keeping. The problem was, they only gave a portion to the church...while implying that they gave everything to the church. They did this because they wanted people to respect them like they respected another man, named Barnabas, who was very generous. In short, they wanted the image of being remarkably generous...without being sacrificially generous.

This was a sin God dealt with publicly because Ananias and Sapphira had acted publicly for public praise. God dealt with it swiftly because they were pretending to be something they were not. It is in that moment that death enters the storyline. To tether this story to ours, when we pretend to be someone we are not, death enters our story as well. Maybe not physical death, but the death of something. It could be our emotional, financial or spiritual stability. Ananias and Sapphira's sin was pride; they wanted everyone to see them as sacrificially generous and spiritually mature...when they were not. They represented the image of maturity without the real difficulty of spiritual life. We can imitate this sin in tons of different ways today. We can easily create an "image" that we are the types of people that trust God...even though our checkbooks would infer otherwise. This is the sin of pride. Pride will corrupt and damage the church greatly...and that is why God dealt with it so harshly and so quickly.

The church was never meant to be a place where we attempt to control our image or to put a mask on. It was always designed to be a place of transparency...a place where we learn the discipline of taking our masks off. That is because we cannot get to where God wants us to go without realizing who we are...and being comfortable enough to admit to others who we really are. A doctor can not heal a person who thinks they are fine. God cannot restore someone who won't admit their need for restoration. So, what does this all mean for us today? It means that we need to work at becoming more honest with others about the true condition of our marriages, our relationships with our kids, and our struggles. Secondly, Scripture's cure for any spiritual disease is to repent and believe.

To repent is to acknowledge your wrongdoing and to turn from that behavior. To believe means to know that God's Spirit is at work in your life...not to bring you shame, but rather to empower you to do what you should be doing. The Gospel should empower us to share our lives with others, just like God has shared His life with us.



## GROW AT HOME

## DAY 43

## REFLECTION from PASTOR MATT CIANFRANI (CONT'D)

As Christians, we should not hide from others like Adam and Eve, but should work to be transparent and loving just as Jesus has been towards us. So, my questions would be, *“What mask are you wearing and what comes to mind when you think about what you are hiding from others?”* The answers to these questions are the very things that God wants to restore and renew. When we hide, whether from God or from others, or when we try to pretend we are someone we are not, almost immediately we quench God's Spirit from working in our lives and step away from the life giving Spirit He has given us. So today, let's take off the mask and begin to be real with each other...and step into the power and healing God's Spirit offers.

## QUESTIONS

- WHAT MASK ARE YOU WEARING? WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM OTHERS?
- HOW HAS THIS KEPT YOU FROM EXPERIENCING GOD'S WORK IN YOUR LIFE?