



There's an important statement made in [Acts 5:29](#) that we need to remember throughout today's lesson: "We must obey God rather than men."

The end of [Acts 4](#) describes the disciples doing whatever needed to be done—including selling lands or houses—to make sure their brothers and sisters had what they needed. But not everyone obeyed God.

But a man named [Ananias](#), with his wife [Sapphira](#), sold a piece of property, 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. 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? 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."

([5:1-4](#))

The lie cost Ananias and Sapphira their lives, and "great fear came upon all who heard of it" ([5:5](#)). But the good news continued to spread, "and more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" ([5:14](#)). As the apostles continued to preach and perform many wonders and signs, the high priest rose up and had them arrested. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and told them, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life" ([5:17-20](#)). Everyone needed to hear the news about Jesus! When the apostles were brought before the Jewish council and threatened? "We must obey God rather than men" ([5:29](#)).

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is [Jesus](#). ([5:42](#))

Eventually, a disciple named Stephen was brought before the council. "Brothers and fathers, hear me..."

- ◆ God appeared to our father [Abraham](#) and called him to "Go."
- ◆ Yet he gave Abraham no inheritance in the Promised Land.
- ◆ Abraham's offspring were sojourners in the land, and eventually slaves in Egypt for 400 years.
- ◆ At this time, [Moses](#) was born.
- ◆ "I will send you to Egypt."
- ◆ Our fathers refused to obey Moses, thrust him aside, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.
- ◆ Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness.
- ◆ Solomon built a house for God.

The point Stephen is leading them to? "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you" ([7:51](#)). When the crowd in [Acts 2](#) heard a similar message, they were cut to the heart ([2:37](#)). This crowd became enraged and stoned Stephen to death, but Stephen was determined to obey God rather than men.

For Class & Family Discussion:

- Let's make sure we understand how Ananias and Sapphira got themselves into trouble (5:1-4). What were they trying to do? Why do you think Peter talked to them like he did?

- Let's read what Peter and the apostles said to the Jewish council in Acts 5:29-32. They referred to Jesus as "Leader and Savior." What can we learn from that? If Jesus is my Leader and Savior...

- In Acts 5:33-41, a respected Pharisee named Gamaliel addressed the council. What did Gamaliel know?

- In Acts 6:1-6, the early church experienced some "growing pains." What was going on and how did the apostles lead the disciples to solve the problem?

- In Acts 7, we hear Stephen address the Jewish council.
 - Why do you think he went back and told the story of the children of Israel to people who were very familiar with the Old Testament?

 - What did he mean when he called them "stiff-necked people" (7:51)?

 - What should the people who heard Stephen have done in that moment? And why didn't they?

 - Luke tells us something incredible in Acts 7:55-56. What can we learn from that?

 - And what about Stephen's attitude in 7:59-60? Is there anything we can learn?

- In your own words, what might it look like to "obey God rather than men" today? Where are the challenges? Why will it always be worth it to obey God, even when it costs us a lot?