

The Holy Spirit, Acts 5

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³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet. (Acts 4-NIV)

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² 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. (Acts 5-NIV)

Imagine spending 10 years of your life creating one the most famous and iconic art works of all time. The room that holds such a piece of artwork? The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome.

Over 20,000 people see this chapel every single day. About 500 years ago a cadre of painters lived in the space, slept in the space and ate together as every brush stroke, every discussion of each fresco, and even God himself captured these artists fullest attention.

The Sistine Chapel is in the official residence of the Pope. People flock from all over the world to experience the immensity of the art. The most famous part of the artwork is the ceiling painted by Michaelangelo. He was a sculptor, not a painter. He had to build 60-foot scaffolding and worked in stifling heat in the summer and bitter cold in the winter.

Michelangelo decided to save his painting of God until last, so he could hone his craft before painting the most difficult image of the entire ceiling. If you should ever have a chance to see such a piece of art, you will likely be greeted in Italian by your guide with the phrase- benvenuti amici. Welcome friends.

Your host has a rugged Mediterranean look, dark hair, olive skin and a handsome smile. But you are less concerned about his looks, what you really care about is the chapel. You are quickly introduced to the Italian gesture of kissing the tips of the fingers as if “something is of exquisite taste.” Your tour guide starts with that gesture and says, the Sistine Chapel, we will now go and experience.

On the way to your destination, it seems like your host knows everything: he gets you into the shortest lines, he knows the names of the guards who keep their eyes on everyone in the Vatican. And he does this all the while talking very fast in an Italian dialect, but English words. Your guide walks fast, speaks faster and expects you to keep up.

By the time you arrive, you wonder if such a place, such a piece of art will live up to the Herculean and Marvel build up. As you enter this cavernous room, your head suddenly tilts up. Your smile grows larger and larger. Your guide points out details one would never see.

“That is the baptism of Jesus,” he says. Over there is Peter receiving the keys to God’s Kingdom from Jesus.

Your guide has changed the way you look at the chapel. You have admired and dreamed of experiencing such a place, but only from a far, now you are here.

On this day, you are thrilled to see it in person.

Wouldn’t it be great if someone could do for the life of Jesus, what this Italian guide did for the chapel? If only we had an expert to teach us. Someone who knows Jesus Christ the way our Italian friend knew the Sistine Chapel. Someone who could introduce us to Jesus, remind us he is always with us, and give us his power.

Someone whose only life mission is to know everything about Jesus. Having spent eternity with Jesus the Holy Spirit is able to do just that. And the Holy Spirit wants you to have the same kind of relationship with Jesus he does.

Jesus tells us the name of such a person, who has such a mission-He is called the **Paraclete**. The word is used 5 times in the bible and 4 of them it was used directly by Jesus. Like our guide who introduced art, lets walk with Jesus who will introduce us to the Paraclete.

*¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [**Paraclete**], that He may abide with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14-NKJV)*

*²⁶ But the Helper [**Paraclete**], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14-NKJV)*

*²⁶ “But when the Helper [**Paraclete**] comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. (John 15-NKJV)*

*⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [**Paraclete**] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (John 16-NKJV)*

*¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth [**Paraclete**], has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16-NKJV)*

In Christianity and the Bible, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Paraclete, a Greek word meaning "advocate," "counselor," or "comforter." The word Paraclete comes from the Greek word which means, "to come alongside." This term, used primarily in John's Gospel, highlights the Holy Spirit's role as a helper and guide for believers.

In Greek, the word "paraclete" (παράκλητος - paraklētos) translates to "called to one's aid" or "advocate". It is often used in Christian theology to refer to the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send as a helper, comforter, and intercessor for believers. The word combines the prefix "para-" (meaning "beside" or "next to") and "kletos" (meaning "called").

If you are new to your relationship with Christ, why not put some extra time in to study these passages from God's word. Why? The Holy Spirit is the one who will make Christ alive. Give you Jesus Christ's power.

Jesus wants you to know him personally, and so he told us that is possible because the 3rd member of the trinity lives in you to make Jesus alive. The Holy Spirit has intelligence, a will and emotions feelings.

As will see in our story, the Holy Spirit can be grieved. The Holy Spirit is so much more than a divine companion to keep you company.

"The chief aim of the Holy Spirit is to escort you into the Sistine Chapel of Jesus and watch your eyes grow wide," as Max Lucado says.

*The Holy Spirit will allow you to peak into the birthing room, as Mary gives birth to the Savior of the world.

*The Holy Spirit will parachute you into Jesus' baptism, and like our Italian guide, tell us that he was there, (the Holy Spirit) present at Jesus baptism. There I am again, that dove descending as the Holy Spirit fills and empowers Jesus.

*The Holy Spirit will help you feel the anxiety Jesus feels in the garden of Gethsemane, at the betrayal of the kiss by Jesus, and as the nails that penetrated his very arms and legs. You can agonize over the death of Jesus because the Holy Spirit was present, and he lives in you.

*You can celebrate Jesus' resurrection, because it was the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. The Spirit was there and the same Spirit lives in you.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8:11-NIV)

I have never recovered from this verse. The very power that raised Jesus, lives in me. So, stop living in fear and anxiety. A supernatural transcendent power resides in you.

The Bible tells us, on resurrection day when Jesus Christ rose from the grave, he demonstrated a supernatural and sovereign transcendent power which has never been witnessed before in all of history.

And that same person, Jesus Christ, that is holding your hand, is the Holy Spirit that makes Jesus alive and gives you the same power. This declaration from Paul in Romans 8:11, was a game changer for the Romans and it can be for you too.

The Holy Spirit expresses His agency as a teacher, wind, intercessor, seal, dove, flame, anointing oil, river of living water, tongues of fire and giver of spiritual gifts.

Teacher-Today we learn that God always only tells the truth and so should we.

Wind-The Spirit like wind is an unseen active member of the Godhead.

Intercessor-what you pray in the night, with words you don't understand, God sees in the light of day, at the throne of God.

Seal-God entrusts the protection of your life to the Holy Spirit who seals. You have been sealed by God, until your day of redemption. God declares with a seal, this person is mine, and this person is protected.

Dove-Why a gentle dove to describe the Holy Spirit? What about the strength of eagle. The wisdom of an owl? The dove of Noah searched for a place to call home. The dove of Jesus told all followers; Jesus is home to live for a season.

Flame-At Pentecost, the flame of the Holy Spirit parceled out tongues of fire. Fire represents purity and the Holy Spirit as a flame flushes out the trash of anxiety and depression.

Heaven arrives packing heat, and today God wants to remind you, fire purifies those areas of your life that need purity activated.

Anointing oil-Jesus was limited to where he could be. Not so with the Holy Spirit and where the oil of the Spirit is, Jesus is present. Jesus was a regional miracle worker; the Holy Spirit is a global miracle worker in every generation.

River of Living Water-at any moment you can release the Holy Spirit like the flowing of a river. Out of your innermost being flows rivers of living water.

Tongues of fire-the telling of your story of Jesus through your speech can be supernatural, ask Peter, one day he is afraid to answer a question, are you with Jesus? Now he is on fire preaching and stirring up trouble with every sermon.

Giver of Spiritual gifts-in Acts 5, Peter uses the spiritual gift of word of knowledge to call out sin. The word of knowledge is one of the many gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

Imagine you are the owner of the Albert Concert Hall in London. The most famous, luxurious and nightly packed concert hall. For generations this has been the premier concert venue inviting international stars to perform. The tickets are expensive. The waiting list is long. Every performance is reported in the press.

In the middle of your concert season, rows of empty seats begin to appear. Suddenly. Unexpectedly. Day after day and night after night, the concert attendance dwindles.

It is not hard to discover the cause. Your concert goes a filling a nearby park, less than a mile to hear 4 boys from Liverpool. They have taken their band on the road to London and are performing just a short distance from the Albert Concert Hall. They call themselves the Beatles and they are emptying the seats of the most famous concert hall in London.

The Beatles are playing a strange mixture of ancient classic and rowdy new songs about love. Everyone is talking about the Beatles, and no one is talking about the guests coming to the Albert Concert Hall. Your revenue shrinks. Your faithful followers, start following the Beatles all over England and become adoring fans. You think must stop. I'll call the police and get them to move on. Or even have them arrested.

At a nearby porch of the Jerusalem temple, the disciples gather daily and teach about Jesus' atoning death and resurrection. The crowds are growing. To add fuel to the spiritual fire, the disciples like Jesus are healing, casting out devils and denouncing the religious establishment who run the religious life of Jerusalem connected to the temple.

The apostles would go into the temple and worship and then stick around at the nearby courtyard pillar and do some preaching and healing. This "in your face," approach, after Pentecost soon got the disciples arrested. Rebuked. And watched constantly by the religious police.

This is where this diagram comes in. Here I am showing you a Holy Spirit guided plan to see Jesus Christ introduced in the power of the Holy Spirit that would light a flame. This Holy Spirit flames would lead to James, the half-brother of Jesus being killed and Peter being arrested. Let me summarize the Holy Spirit activity introducing Jesus and his redemption and the persecution from the temple overlords. The religious police were bent on stomping out this fledgling new Christ sect. The Jesus people were meeting daily in the lobby of the temple preaching Jesus and doing miracles in his name in the power of the Holy Spirit.

<u>Holy Spirit Activity</u>	<u>Consequences</u>
Speak in other tongues (2:4)	Mockery of drunkenness (2:13)
Healing of Lame Beggar (3:6)	Imprisoned & Stop Preaching (4)
Generous Giving (4:37)	Hypocrisy and death (5)
Many Signs and Wonders (5:12,16)	All apostles imprisoned (5:18)
Supernatural jail Break (5:19)	Threat of death, but beaten (5:40)
Many Signs and Wonders (6:8)	Stephen Stoned to Death (7:59-60)
Church Scattered (8:1)	Saul destroys the church (8:3)
Peter and John in Samaria (8)	Simon/ Ethiopian converted (8)
Paul is converted and healed (9)	Miraculous conversion (9)
Peter raises the dead (9:40)	Peter has a vision (10)

What is interesting in the midst of the activity of the Holy Spirit, Luke tells us about an occasion when God did some church discipline.

Acts 5 records the first public discipline of sin in the church.

Even though the church began on the day of Pentecost, the word “church” appears first in Acts 5.

Peter uses his gift of “word of knowledge” to expose hypocrisy in the church.

Check any list of what people are looking for in their leaders and you will find **honesty** at the top of the list.

(1) Ask a single person what quality they are looking for in a life-time partner and they will say, “HONESTY.”

(2) Ask citizens what they most want from their elected officials-it’s HONESTY.

(3) Ask congregants what they want most from their church leaders and pastors-it’s HONESTY.

It always comes around to honesty. The reason I am going to laser focus on HONESTY or TRUTH TELLING is because it forms the very core of all change in the Christian faith. If you won’t be honest about your life, to you and others, your spiritual growth will be slow.

The older I get the less tolerant I become to deceit, spin or distortion from anybody or any source. The older I get the sharper my radar becomes to any kind of image management that seeks to impress me or tries to draw my attention away from someone's fundamental identity.

At this point in my life, I have close to a ZERO tolerance for distortion. Spin. Lies. Deceit. Image Management.

I know the damage that it does. I see it almost daily as I work with families, help many in counseling, read about it in the news and even watch it try to **raise its ugly head** in my own life.

I know the loss of trust that results.

I observe the years of unresolved conflicts that linger.

I am aware of the atmosphere of cynicism that sets in.

Now, the **irony** here is that I have told my fair share of lies. On more than one occasion I have put a little spin on something or exaggerated a story. Or as happened years ago I told 3 half-truths or lies at work. What? Yes, your pastor had a really bad day when it comes to HONESTY. It so wrecked me that when I got home, I told Danice what had happened and knelt down and just emotionally fell apart. I knelt and asked to pray for me because I want that kind of activity **removed from my life.** She did. And it was.

If a moral mess-up like me has a growing disdain for deceit, spin and dishonesty can you imagine for a moment how much a...

...TOTALLY HOLY GOD must hate dishonesty of any kind.

If dishonesty and deception bother me and you, what must dishonesty do to a God who has ALWAYS ONLY EVER TELLS THE TRUTH?

The One who has ALWAYS ONLY EVER PROCLAIMED THE TRUTH TO THE WORLD since eternity past.

God always only ever tells the truth.

Now, Acts 5 records one of the most sobering stories in all of church history about HONESTY/TRUTH-TELLING. Go with me to the pews and the people of the NT church after Pentecost. The church explodes into existence on Pentecost.

Mighty rushing wind. Tongues of fire on everyone. Everyone spoke other languages. And the church was born. The streets were filled with people wanting to know what was happening at Pentecost. The key feature to this news? **Church is for everyone.**

Growth everywhere. 3000 new believers come into this new church in Jerusalem. Shortly after this first influx several 1000's more come into the church. We read directly from the bible as to the reason for such supernatural growth.

³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all... (Acts 4)

(1) Stories of miraculous healings were circulating amongst the new believers.

(2) Many who had been bound by addictions or bound by prison chains told the stories of God's delivering works.

(3) Those who lived for themselves now spent their energies helping the poor and the needy.

(4) They prayed bold prayers, and God answered them with signs and wonders. In Acts 4:29, we get a glimpse of the threats.

(29) Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. (Acts 4-NIV)

(5) The rich in that new church cared deeply for the poor. ³⁴ *that there were no needy persons among them.*

Ethnic divisions dissolved. Worship flowed toward heaven with great freedom and joy. About everything that can go right with a church is going right.

A man named **Barnabas** notices that many of the brand-new believers in Christ are poor.

(1) So poor that they can't feed their families.

(2) So poor that the kids are struggling for medical care.

(3) So poor because moms and dads are without jobs.

This breaks the heart of Barnabas. He is wealthy and is a business guy. He travels. He encourages and builds people up. He sells land. He can meet the needs of others out of his wealth.

For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. ³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4-NIV)

So, Barnabas is in Jerusalem going to church. He notices that this church is thriving. This church is multi-ethnic. They worship is like no other church he has attended. The preaching of the resurrection is producing resurrected lives and Barnabas wants to get involved.

He hears of a need while in church one day and senses the Holy Spirit prompting him to meet that need. So, he sells some land and brings the revenue from the sale to the church leaders, and he instructs them to:

...feed the poor and hungry people that are pouring into our church.

This is pretty cool. Hope Wichita (formerly Convoy of Hope) type-living. In that day and in our day. First century Convoy of Hope living. Now just like the stories of miracles and healings that get around and fire up faith, Barnabas act of giving in story form gets around the church and fires up some faith...

Now in chapter 5:1 we meet another couple that also gets fired up to give to the poor. They enter from the left side of the stage and their names are Ananias and Sapphira.

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. These believers in Christ do the same thing as Barnabas.

The problem is this couple wanted more than to see the poor taken care, they wanted personal recognition. They wanted to be more than members of this new fired up church, they wanted prominence. They wanted the praise of men.

They see the needs of the poor and they too have a piece of property and go and sell it and **they pretend to do** what Barnabas has done.

Which is to bring the proceeds of the sale to the apostles for distribution to the poor. But they **skim** some of the sales price and they hold it back, and they proceed to present the money to the apostles as though it were the whole price just as Barnabas had done.

These facts are told in verse 2. Strikingly different activity than what we have seen happening in the church.

² 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.

Think about it with me now: they care about the poor. They are being generous and don't have to sell the property and give it to the poor. They are being quite sacrificial if you think about it. But they are being just a little bit deceitful don't you think? Not doing the honesty thing in church.

Is it really that big of a deal? The poor still get served. The apostles do their part by attending for the revenue, giving tax donations, and moving the money to the recipient. No one really gets hurt, do they? In fact, no one really knows what is going on, do they?

As the story goes on enter Peter stage left. And using his spiritual gift of discernment and word of knowledge he calls out Ananias and Saphira. Peter's gift is found in 1 Cor 12.

*⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a **message of knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,*

¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b] ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Cor 12-NIV)

A word of knowledge is a gift of information that a person has no way of knowing apart from the Holy Spirit.

Wow! Watch it, Peter, you are going to scare of the donors. And we don't want that, do we? Peter confronts the husband first.

³ 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? ⁴ 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."

Quick timeout. How many times do we think we only lie horizontally? Amongst us. What Peter is saying is that every lie you tell is more a vertical affront than a horizontal affront. You have not lied to men you have lied to God. Do you know what happens? Shocking.

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died.

There is a death in church. It's not a coincidental heart attack. Friends, God pulled the plug on the breath of life that was on loan to Ananias and God said, "Ok, bud you are done using my life-breath.

Ever think of it that way. All of your breath you have comes from God. *And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.*

God took his life. God took his life. Fell over dead. Yikes you say. Hang on friend. It gets worse. ⁷ *About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.*

Perhaps Sapphira is wondering what is taking so long with her husband. Sure, seems like a long time to make a donation at church. Could it really take that long to give some money to the poor? She thinks, "I think I will go and see what is taking so long."

As she enters church she runs into Peter who casually asks her about the donation that she and her husband made to the church to give to the poor when they sold some land.

Notice no thanks for any portion of the gift. No dancing around the issue. Peter hits the issue straight on. In all of our lives there comes a time when God deals straight with us.

⁸ *Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"*

She is going to keep her story straight with her husband. So, she goes full price. Just like Barnabas. We did the same thing which wasn't honest. She lied. She spun the story. She was DISHONEST.

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Peter doesn't say, "is that your final answer?" He calls her out just like her husband. Peter says something in lowered voice. Shshsh.

Do you hear that? What is that? Be really quiet. Do you hear footsteps? They sound like footsteps of the undertaker coming back from burying your husband for telling the lie you just told.

Now, she knows why her husband was so late. And it is not what she thought. And then she falls over dead. God takes her life as well.

¹⁰ *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.*

Ananias and Sapphira's act of hypocrisy was premeditated.

Ananias and Sapphira's act of hypocrisy was motivated by pride.

Interesting how this story ends. When the word circulates around the church. In the meetings. In the lobby. On the road. Are you aware of what happened to that wealthy couple? When the whole church heard about the events, "great fear seized the whole church."

Do you think?

¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. (Acts 5-NIV)

I bet every church member that night sat down with their family members went wow...we are going to make some changes as a family about the HONESTY practice.

I would dare say in CR, a lot more people get tokens for telling the truth and announcing this is the truth about my addiction. Everyone in that church came to the same conclusion-God is sort of sensitive about the HONESTY issue. God takes it personally.

If you are wondering why God is so sensitive about the HONESTY and TRUTH-TELLING issue can I venture a guess? Why was it so important to send a signal to that early church?

Why is God so sensitive to truth-telling? Everything is built on trust.

(1) This brand-new church had no idea about how quickly this blessing and favor of God could turn into a nightmare and internal disaster?

(2) If even trace amounts of DISHONESTY were to creep in.

(3) God knew that his church, and families, and marriages, and business and friendships all function on based on trust. And when trust is broken by distortion, lies, spin, dishonesty things can go south so fast that the damage is irreparable.

(4) In my opinion God was sending a shot over the bow of the church and saying, "hey friends what you have is so important, so precious and so rare, so spiritually inspired and most of all so critical to my redemptive dream for the lost world that I will not stand idly by and watch DISHONESTY in any form. Spin, lies, half-truths tear my church apart and render it powerless.

(5) DISHONESTY renders believers powerless before a holy God.

(6) I love my church too much. I love the potential in the church. I love the people too much to allow DISHONESTY to wreck my plans.

(7) So God says, "every time you walk past the fresh graves of Ananias and Sapphira" reflect on how critical HONESTY is in the church and in your life. In your marriage. With your friends. In your business.

So, make up your mind to always, only ever tell the truth. What better way to end then for all of us, to up our game in truth telling.

Father, Today I have learned you are a totally holy God who hates dishonesty of any kind. Everything in life is built on trust and truth. What is at stake in my life and my local church is far too important to allow sin, lies, image management and any lack of truth telling to go on any longer.

Today I repent of my deceit, and I start on a new journey with you. You are the God, who always only ever tells the truth. Holy Spirit, I invite you to teach me. Correct me. And most of all I ask you and Jesus to forgive me.

God, your word is to be heeded. Your word is to be obeyed. So, today I start again with truthfulness.

In Jesus Name. Amen.