



The Number of Disciples Multiplied Greatly

Acts 5:1-11; 6:1-7

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Overview: After providing numerous references to troubles outside of the church, Luke turns our attention to significant problems within the church. The first instance involves a husband and wife who appear generous in their giving, though in reality they were deceiving the church. The sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira illustrate the importance of integrity among God's people, resulting in great fear coming upon the whole church. The second instance of problems within the church involves widows whose material needs were being overlooked due to ethnic and logistical issues. The commitment to apostolic preaching being supplemented by a diaconate ministry highlights the importance of sound leadership among God's people, resulting in continued church growth. Both incidents underscore the importance of integrity and intentionality among members and leaders for biblical church growth.

01. Church discipline is a biblical mandate designed to encourage holiness among church members, expose fraudulent faith among hypocrites, and undergird evangelistic efforts to unbelievers.

02. Church leadership is a biblical model premised on the integrity of those who lead and performed according to the abilities God has given.

03. Church growth is a biblical method involving members and leaders who honor God with their lives, honor His word in their worship, and honor one another through their service.

THIS PROMISE IS FOR YOU AND FOR ALL

1. In what ways do the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira illustrate church discipline today? In what way does Matthew 18:15-17 instruct us regarding the process of church discipline? What happens to a church when its members cease observing Jesus's instructions to enforce or come under church discipline?

2. What ideas about giving financially to the church come to mind as you read Acts 5:1-4? What rationale might Ananias and Sapphira have come up with that caused them to deceive the church? Have you been faithful in giving to the church when God has blessed you with extra income?

3. Acts 5:3-9 contains significant passages regarding the Holy Spirit. What does this text teach us regarding the person of the Holy Spirit? Notice how easily Peter identified the Holy Spirit with God (verses 3-4), thus teaching us that the Spirit of God is not less than God. What other texts can you find that teach the equality of the Spirit with the Father and Son?

4. What problems can arise in the church when people feel overlooked? In light of this reality, what do you conclude about the twelve remaining committed to "preaching the word" rather than serving tables? Why should preaching the word and prayer have such priority in the ministry?

5. How important is it to have leaders in the church who are specifically called to minister to the material needs of church members? Why must their lives be characterized by integrity, spirituality, and skill?

For Further Reading: Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Crossway, 2005).

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