

The Early Church

A Truth-Telling Church

1. Acts 5:1-11 presents a clear message: God holds His children accountable for their behavior. In this case, the sin was not telling the truth—lying. But lying takes many forms; name a few of them and give a definition or an illustration of each.
2. Flattery is a form of lying, defined as “strategic praise” or “praise with a purpose.” What does Proverbs 26:28 say about flattery? How can we misuse praise for our own gain? Give a hypothetical example within an interpersonal relationship, and another with an employer / teacher / coworker. Give an example of proper, Biblical praise (of a person).
3. Another form of lying is slander. Slander is telling vicious, over-exaggerated, or partial truth with a design to hurt another. Read Psalm 101:5 and Proverbs 10:18. Why is slander so destructive? In contrast, how does God want our speech to be characterized (Colossians 4:6)?
4. Are we testing the Holy Spirit when we engage in activity such as lying, flattery, slander and other forms of deception (and think we’re justified, for whatever reason)? Then should we be surprised at God’s judgment on us individually or as a church as a result of allowing such activity to happen? Read Psalm 15:1-3 and Proverbs 6:16-19. How important is truth-telling to our fellowship with God?
5. How should we respond when others flatter us, slander others in our hearing, or speak obvious falsehoods? See Proverbs 20:19; Proverbs 10:18, 14:7; address each one individually and with specific commands from Scripture. Now look at Matthew 18:15-17 and discuss the three-step process given by God to deal with any kind of known sin among believers in the church—so we can deal with it before God has to deal with us. Why is this process so often overlooked?
6. While we must be honest and truth-telling as believers, what must be our one over-riding consideration in the process? Read Ephesians 4:14-16. Give two or three clear illustrations of this truth.
7. God seems to judge harshly at times—for instance, the account of Ananias and Sapphira. What was a result of God’s judgment in this passage (v. 11)? Why did unbelievers fear joining the church in verse 13? How should this change us and strengthen our own walk with the Lord?

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And 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. ³But 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? ⁴While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

⁵Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?”

She said, “Yes, for so much.”

⁹Then 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.” ¹⁰Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. ¹¹So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

¹²And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch. ¹³Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. ¹⁴And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. ¹⁶Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

¹⁷Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, ¹⁸and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”

²¹And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

²²But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, ²³saying, “Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!” ²⁴Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. ²⁵So one came and told them, saying, “Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”

²⁶Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?” And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”

²⁹But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.

³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

³³When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. ³⁴Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. ³⁸And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”

⁴⁰And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴²And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Guest Speaker Troy Weigert

Read: Acts 6:1-15

Monday

v. 1 — Compare the problem in Acts 6:1 to the division in Eph. 2:11-16; note the similarities. Should our relationships in the body of Christ be divided along racial, national, social, or economic lines? Read Ephesians 2:14-16; how are we able to transcend such barriers?

Tuesday

v. 1-4 — The Greek word for “neglected” (v. 1) indicates an oversight that was, very likely, unintentional. A clue to this is also found by contrasting this account with that of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). The Apostles did not rebuke the Hebrews; they chose to attack the problem. One of the four rules of communication is: “attack the problem, not the person.” Do you seek to solve problems, or do you tend to attack the person?

Wednesday

v. 2-4 — Many people believe that Acts 6 introduces the office of deacon. From this passage, what are the primary functions of “deacons”? Can you think of any other passages which pertain to the office of deacon? Use a concordance to find as many passages as you can that pertain to this biblical office.

Thursday

v. 5-7 — The disciples at Jerusalem chose men with Greek names as the first deacons (v.5). These men would have had a vested interest in the care of their own widows. Is there any indirect indication that these deacons did their job well (v.7)? People usually do their best when they are excited about the ministry God has entrusted to them; are you currently serving in at least one ministry that you are passionate about?

Friday

v. 8 — God performed “great wonders and signs” through Stephen. Most believers would like to be used of God in a great way. Read Mark 10:42-44 and Luke 16:10-12; what two principals must every believer understand before he can be greatly used of God?

Saturday

v. 9-15 — Does being a true servant of God mean being a “doormat” or refusing to contend with anyone? Read Proverbs 24:25, Galatians 2:11, I Timothy 5:20, and I Thessalonians 5:14 for further reference. What characteristic of Stephen do we need to emulate as we contend for the faith (v.10)?