

Lesson 12: Priscilla & Sapphira

A Wise Wife & A Worldly Wife

Text: Acts 5:1-11; 18:1-3, 24-26; Romans 16:3-5



"Growing In The Word": Lesson Text & Discussion

In this lesson, we'll look at two married women who were very different from each other. Both of them "helped" their husbands, but only one helped in the right way and for a right reason.

Read Acts 5:1-2. Here we are introduced to a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira. They sold something that they owned which we later read was a piece of land. They were doing this in order to contribute money to the church. If you look back at the last two verses of chapter 4, you will see that others did this as well. We read that Barnabas sold his land and brought the money to the apostles at the church. Ananias and Sapphira seemed to be doing the same thing, but it was not. Were they going to give all the money they received for the sale of their land? (No) Ananias decided to keep back part of the money for themselves, and his wife Sapphira knew it and went right along with his plan. He went alone, taking the money and laying it at the feet of the apostles.

Read Acts 5:3-4. Which apostle spoke to Ananias? (Peter) Peter did not thank Ananias for his generous contribution, but instead, accused him of a sin. What sin did he say Ananias had committed? (Lying) Ananias had lied about the amount of money he sold the land for. Apparently, Peter had asked him if the amount given was the amount the land sold for and Ananias had said that it was. This was not true. Was it wrong for Ananias and Sapphira to keep part of the money for themselves? (No) Peter told Ananias that when he sold the land, the money was his to do with whatever he liked. If he wanted to donate all of it to the church, great. If he only wanted to donate part of it and use the rest to remodel his house, pay bills, or whatever, that was fine too. The problem and sin was in the fact that he lied to Peter and the rest of the apostles by saying he had given all of it. Peter was not as concerned with the fact that Ananias had lied to *him*, but he was very concerned about who Ananias was really lying to. Who did Peter accuse him of lying to? (The Holy Spirit) Who did Peter say had put that into the heart of Ananias? (Satan) **John 8:44** tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Lying to the Holy Spirit, to God is a serious matter. **Proverbs 6:17** tells us that the Lord hates a lying tongue.

Read Acts 5:5-6. What happened as soon as Ananias heard the words of Peter? (He fell down dead at Peter's feet.) People who were there at the time started spreading the word of what had happened. How did it affect the people who heard about it? (They were afraid.) What was done to the body of Ananias? (It was carried out and buried.) Meanwhile, Sapphira was still home, waiting for Ananias to return, but he didn't.

Read Acts 5:7-9. Three hours later, and Ananias still hadn't returned home. Sapphira wanted to know what had happened, so she went to see the apostles. Peter questioned her about the sale of their land. He asked her if they had sold it for a certain amount (the amount that Ananias had brought as a contribution.) Sapphira was faced with a choice: Would she tell the truth to the apostles and before God, or would she stick with her husband and tell the lie? What choice did she make? (She lied.) Peter was amazed that she would agree to do such a thing with her husband. It is great for wives to support their husbands but not when it is to do something that is wrong. In that case, she should stand alone if necessary to do what is right. Sapphira, like her husband, was worldly. They wanted to look good and appear so generous in front of everybody by saying they had sold their land and donated all of the money to the church, but they also wanted to keep some money for themselves to spend as they wished. They were more concerned with themselves and what they wanted than being concerned with helping others. Pride, greediness, and worldiness have no place in the heart of a Christian.

Read Acts 5:10-11. What happened to Sapphira as soon as she lied to Peter? (She fell down dead at his feet.) She was carried out and buried right next to her husband. They agreed to lie together in life, and it cost them both their lives so they will lie next to each other in death. How sad! What if Sapphira had tried to influence her husband to do right? What if she had talked to him, encouraging him to be a strong Christian by telling the truth and putting the needs of others before themselves? We will never know. Sapphira helped her husband in the wrong way. She made the choice to do evil right along with him instead of doing what was right.

Now let's look at the example of another woman who stood with her husband but helped him to do what was right.

Read Acts 18:1-3. The apostle Paul had traveled to the city of Corinth, and he met a Christian couple who worked in the same trade as he. What were their names? (Aquila and Priscilla) They were tent-makers as was Paul, so he stayed with them and worked with them to earn his living while being in Corinth to preach. We're not told too much about Aquila and Priscilla here other than they were Jews who had just moved to Corinth from Italy and were tent-makers who let Paul work and live with them. Let's read on to learn more.

Read Acts 18:24-26. Here we read about a man named Apollos who was preaching and teaching in the city of Ephesus. He was very enthusiastic about preaching the gospel, and he

was teaching the truth, but there was still a problem. What was it? (He only knew of the baptism of John.) While he was alive, John the baptist had been preaching repentance to the people and encouraging them to be baptized for repentance. Read **Acts 19:4**. After Jesus had died on the cross and was resurrected, and after his church was established on the day of Pentecost, baptism changed. According to **Acts 2:38**, whose name was one to be baptized in, and what was the baptism for? (For those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, baptism is to be done in his name for the remission of sins.) Priscilla and her husband heard the preaching of Apollos and wanted to help him learn about baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Did they call him out in front of everyone and embarrass him publicly, or did they teach him privately? (They took him aside and taught him privately.) Priscilla was helping her husband teach another person how to do right. What a difference from Sapphira who helped her husband do what was wrong.

Read Romans 16:3-5. We learn even more about Priscilla and her husband in these verses. First of all, how does Paul refer to them? (Fellow workers in Christ Jesus) They were faithful Christians who worked hard in the church and helped others in any way they could. They even helped Paul in some memorable way because he says they “*risked their own necks for my life*”. Paul was often threatened when he preached Jesus. Sometimes, he was thrown in prison, beaten, or even stoned. There must have been an occasion when he was in trouble of some sort like this, and Aquila and Priscilla helped him at a great risk to their own safety. What faithful friends! We also learn from these verses that a church met in their home. House churches were very common in the first century.

In all of these verses, Priscilla is listed as diligently working right alongside her husband whether it was in their tent-making trade, teaching the gospel, helping others, or showing hospitality by opening their home for a church to meet there. Sapphira and Priscilla were married women who worked together with their husbands but definitely not in the same way. Sapphira was the worldly wife who joined her husband in doing wrong while Priscilla shines as a bright example of a wise wife who helped her husband work for the Lord. **Proverbs 12:4** tells us, “*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.*” Priscilla could certainly be called Aquila's crown!

Review Questions: (Answers are provided in the Answer Key.)

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira sell?
2. What did they decide to do with the money from the sale?
3. What sin did Peter accuse Ananias of?

4. Was it wrong of Ananias and Sapphira to keep back part of the money from their sale?
5. Who did Peter say had put this sin into the heart of Ananias?
6. Who does John 8:44 refer to as "*the father of lies*"?
7. What happened to Ananias as a result of his sin?
8. Did Sapphira know what had happened to her husband?
9. How long was it from the time Ananias went to Peter and the time Sapphira went to him?
10. Did Sapphira have a chance to do what was right?
11. What choice did she make, and what was the result?
12. Where was Sapphira buried?
13. What was the name of Priscilla's husband?
14. What trade did she and her husband work at?
15. Which apostle came to work and live with them for awhile?
16. Who did Priscilla and her husband teach privately?
17. How did Paul describe Priscilla and her husband in Romans 16?
18. In what way had Priscilla and her husband helped Paul?
19. What group met in the home of Priscilla and her husband?
20. Priscilla shows us an example of an excellent wife. How does Proverbs 12:4 describe a wife such as that?



"Putting Down Roots": Memory Work

- Memorize Proverbs 12:4
- Memorize Acts 5:9



"Farther Afield": Map Work

Map 6

- Locate the city of Rome
- Locate the country of Italy
- Locate the region of Pontus
- Locate the city of Alexandria
- Locate the city of Ephesus



"Harvest Fun": Games & Activities

- Which Woman? - For this game, each player will need two index cards. On one card, write the name "Priscilla", and on the other write the name "Sapphira". As the following clues are read aloud, each player will hold up the card containing the correct answer.
 1. This woman had a conversation with the apostle Peter. (Sapphira)
 2. This woman's husband was Aquila. (Priscilla)
 3. The apostle Paul worked and stayed with this woman and her husband. (Priscilla)
 4. This woman had lived in Italy. (Priscilla)

5. This woman's husband was Ananias. (Sapphira)
 6. This woman was buried by her husband. (Sapphira)
 7. This woman helped her husband teach Apollos. (Priscilla)
 8. This woman risked her neck for the apostle Paul. (Priscilla)
 9. A church met in the house of this woman. (Priscilla)
 10. This woman conspired with her husband to lie to God. (Sapphira)
 11. This woman's death brought great fear upon the church. (Sapphira)
 12. This woman was a member of the church. (Both!)
 13. This woman was a tentmaker. (Priscilla)
 14. This woman's husband sold some land. (Sapphira)
 15. Which woman helped her husband? (Trick question! - You could technically say both because Sapphira "helped" Ananias even though it was in wrongdoing, or you could just say Priscilla who was the godly helper to her husband.)
- For this game, players will take turns drawing while other players try to guess what the picture is. A point may be awarded for each correct picture guess. After correctly identifying a picture, another point may be awarded if the player can then explain how that particular item relates to the lesson. (Answers are provided below after each word in bold type.) Before play begins, have someone who is not playing the game write the following bold words on a card, one word per card: **land** (Ananias and Sapphira sold some land), **money** (Ananias brought money to the apostles), **feet** (Ananias laid the money at the feet of the apostles), **the church** (great fear came upon the church after Ananias and Sapphira died), **Italy** (Aquila and Priscilla had lived there), **tents** (Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul were all tent-makers), **baptism** (Apollos only knew of the baptism of John), **synagogue** (Apollos was speaking boldly here), **the Scriptures** (Apollos was described as being mighty in the Scriptures), **house** (Aquila and Priscilla held worship services in their house), **neck** (Aquila and Priscilla risked their necks for Paul). To begin playing, show one player a word card then let him have two minutes to try to draw it on either a large sheet of paper or a white board. Whichever player guesses correctly scores one point as stated above, then is given the opportunity to score

an additional point by being able to explain how that item fits into the lesson. That player gets to draw next and so on until all cards are used. Player with the most points wins or this can simply be played for fun and review purposes.



"Digging Deeper": Research

- Tent-making - Aquila and Priscilla, along with the apostle Paul, were tent-makers by trade. Learn about the process of tent-making in Bible times. What materials were used? How were tents enlarged? How often would someone acquire a new tent?
- The Church - Ananias, Sapphira, Aquila, and Priscilla were all Christians in the early church. Let's research more about it and how it started. How many churches did Jesus say he would build? (Matthew 16:18) On what day was the first sermon preached and people were saved? (Acts 2:1, 40-41) How were the people saved? (Acts 2:38; 41) Who adds people to the Lord's church? (Acts 2:47) Jesus said in John 4:24 that people needed to worship God in "*spirit and in truth*". What acts of worship do we find in the New Testament that were practiced by the Lord's church? 1. _____ (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) 2. _____ (I Tim. 2:1-8) 3. _____ (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:7) 4. _____ (II Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:7) 5. _____ (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29) Answers are provided in the Answer Key.



"Food For Thought": Puzzles

- "Husbands and Wives" Matching - On the following page, match the husband on the left with his wife on the right. Scriptures are provided if you need a little help. Answers are provided in the Answer Key.

Genesis 24:67	Genesis 41:45	Exodus 2:21	Ruth 1:2
Esther 2:16-17	Hosea 1:3	Matthew 1:5	Acts 5:1
	Acts 18:2	Acts 24:24	

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|-------------------|--------------|
| ____ 1. Aquila | a. Sapphira |
| ____ 2. Moses | b. Rebekah |
| ____ 3. Salmon | c. Naomi |
| ____ 4. Joseph | d. Drusilla |
| ____ 5. Ananias | e. Priscilla |
| ____ 6. Isaac | f. Gomer |
| ____ 7. Ahasuerus | g. Zipporah |
| ____ 8. Elimilech | h. Rahab |
| ____ 9. Hosea | i. Asenath |
| ____ 10. Felix | j. Esther |

- What Happened Next? - Read the following then fill in the blank with what happened next. Scriptures are listed to help you. Answers are provided in the Answer Key.

1. "Then immediately she fell down at his feet..." _____
 _____ (Acts 5:10)
2. "When Aquila and Priscilla heard him..." _____
 _____ (Acts 18:26)
3. "To whom not only I give thanks..." _____
 _____ (Romans 16:4)

4. "Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession..." _____
_____ (Acts 5:1-2)
5. "And the young men came in and found her dead..." _____
_____ (Acts 5:10)
6. "So great fear came upon the church..." _____
_____ (Acts 5:11)
7. "Then Ananias, hearing these words..." _____
_____ (Acts 5:5)
8. "So because he was of the same trade..." _____
_____ (Acts 18:3)
9. "He spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord..." _____
_____ (Acts 18:25)
10. "So great fear came upon all those who heard these things..." _____
_____ (Acts 5:5-6)



"Fruits Of Our Labor": Crafts

- Tent treats - Aquila and Priscilla were skilled in the art of tent-making and used it to support themselves. Here's a tasty tent treat that makes a great snack for this lesson. After all, learning is hard work! For this snack you will need graham crackers, peanut butter or frosting, chocolate chips and fruit roll-ups or caramel wraps. First, melt some chocolate chips until smooth. Spread melted chocolate on two of the graham crackers and chill until firm. To make an A-frame tent, lay one plain cracker flat on the table for the base, and "glue" the other two chocolate-covered crackers to the base with peanut butter or frosting, chocolate side facing out. Then "glue" them together at the top, forming an upside down V. Cut a

tent fly or tent flaps out of fruit roll-ups or caramel wraps to cover the back and front of the tent. You can also cover the sides of the tent with either of these in place of the chocolate if you'd like.

- Priscilla/Sapphira Paper Dolls - Use the template in Appendix B, printing out two copies. Color them and cut them out leaving a border around them so you have two matching rectangle shapes with the woman in the middle. You want to leave enough of a border so you can write words around each woman. After you've cut them out, write their name above their head, then list characteristics of each one all around them. For example, for Priscilla, you might list things like wise, helpful, honest, faithful Christian, etc. while for Sapphira you might list things like worldly, dishonest, disobedient to the Lord, etc. After you've listed characteristics for each of them, glue them back to back with a large tongue depressor between them so you have a "handle" to hold and flip the pictures back and forth. Show the finished product to someone and explain what kind of women each of them were and what kind of woman/wife God desires women to be.