

*not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." As seen by our actions it always goes back to our hearts. If we have a heart for God, giving to us would be a double honor to give till it hurts. But if we give only because we feel we much we are missing out on the blessings God will bestow upon us. For God will give to us so that we can give to others in need as seen in **II Corinthians 8:12:** "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted accord-*

ing to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." Always remember when it comes to giving to God, God wants our heart first. Let us first give ourselves to the Lord. (II Cor 8:1-5) This is the mistake Ananias & Sapphira made - their hearts were not right with God. It was all about self! It's your choice.

Bill Davis

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Faithful Sayings

Olsen Park Church of Christ

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Services

Sunday: 9:30 a.m.
10:20 a.m.
6:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Fred Perez
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Ananias & Sapphira

All of us who have been raised in the church have heard or studied about the problem Ananias & Sapphira got themselves into in the book of Acts chapter 5 by lying to God. **Acts 5:1-11:** "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostle's feet. But 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? While 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." Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter asked her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." Then 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." Then 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. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things."

Now their problem started back in Acts 4:32 in which the believers who were one in heart and mind shared their possessions with those of the church who were in need. The believers brought the money they had and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. These believers sold their property and possessions and gave all that they made off their property to the apostles to share with those in need. The early church shared their possessions and their property as a result of the unity they had by the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early Christians. This couple, Ananias & Sapphira, who saw all that was being done both agreed to sell their property and give to the apostles. The only problem was that they both agreed to keep back part of the sales price they received, while lying to the apostles in saying that they were giving all. In other words, they wanted the credit for their giving, but lying in the process regarding giving all they made from this sale. Now up to this point I commend both of them for selling their property and giving to the poor. I dare say a lot of us today would have a problem doing this act of kindness. The problem started when they both agreed to lie about how much they were giving to the Lord.

They were giving their left overs not their first fruits. If we want to get a good feel about first fruits lets take a look at the book of Malachi. In Malachi, Malachi singled out the priests for condemnation concerning their worship. They knew what God would require, yet their sacrifices were unworthy and their service toward God was insincere. They were lazy, arrogant, and insensitive to being reverent toward God. They had a lazy, casual attitude toward how they were worshiping God by giving their left overs to God instead of their first fruits. In other words, the priests and the people were worshiping God in the cheapest way they could. Their method of giving showed their real attitude toward God, that is to say, "God, here is my left over money and time." Do we do the same sin today as they did in Malachi in which the worshipers didn't want to bring anything of value to give to God? You know, what we give God does reflect our true attitude toward Him. The sin that Ananias & Sapphira committed was not stinginess or just holding back part of the money they made. Peter reminded Ananias that it was their choice regarding whether or not to sell their land and on how much to give to the apostles to give to the needy. Their sin was lying to God and to God's people in saying they gave all the money they made when they chose to hold back some for themselves in an effort to try to make

themselves appear more generous than they really were. Ananias & Sapphira were both judged harshly because their act of dishonesty, covetousness and greed will be destructive to any church. Lying is evil but it is more than evil when we make a choice to lie and to think we can deceive God and those in the church. Lying also destroys our relationship with other church members. Trust is a hard thing to rebuild once it has been broken. (Col 3:9; Prov 6:16-17; Rev 21:8) Most assuredly we destroy our relationship with God if we do not repent. Lying will also destroy our testimony as Christians concerning who we are and the name we carry, Christian. When Ananias & Sapphira were both struck down with death, this action from God produced shock and fear among the believers in the church. This action made the believers and those outside the church realize how seriously God regards sin in His church.

Can we today as Christians lie to God about what we are giving or do we kind of fudge on a true-lie? Today, do we give out of our heart or do we give out of our left -overs? Do we purpose in our hearts to give just enough to get by so we can spend the rest on our pleasure? Do we give God our blemished sacrifices when we keep the best for self and pleasure? Do we do our giving and our service to be seen of men or to be approved of by God? Are we like the poor widow who gave all she had when she gave out

of her poverty? She put in everything she had as seen in **Mark 12: 41-44**: ***"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*** You see, as Christians, when we give to God, we should give freely as seen in **Luke 6: 38**: ***"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."***

As Christians, we should give with simplicity as seen in **Romans 12:8** ***"He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who give, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."*** We should give regularly as in **I Corinthians 16:2**: ***"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."*** As Christians we should give cheerfully as seen in **II Corinthians 9:7**: ***"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart,***