

12-28-25 Points

Title: Living Honestly Before God: The Cost of Deception in Christian Community

Sermon Summary:

This sermon examines the early church's radical generosity and the sobering account of Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 4-5, challenging believers to live with complete honesty before God. The pastor emphasizes that while God doesn't demand we give everything, He does require truthfulness in our hearts and actions. The message explores how the early church shared everything freely out of genuine love and Spirit-led conviction, contrasting this with the deception that entered when Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all while holding back part of their gift. The sermon calls for self-examination as the year ends, encouraging believers to evaluate their authenticity, surrender, and willingness to let God direct their lives. It addresses the universal human tendency toward deception, particularly regarding finances, and challenges Christians to demolish strongholds—concrete mindsets contrary to God's Word—through divine power. The ultimate message is about genuine surrender versus pretense, trusting God with everything, and living distinctively as God's people in a world that cannot see the difference between believers and non-believers.

Key Points:

- God's compassions are new every morning, and He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve
- The early church demonstrated radical unity, sharing everything without claiming personal ownership
- Ananias and Sapphira's sin wasn't in keeping back money but in lying about it to appear more generous than they were
- Satan fills our hearts when we allow deception to replace Spirit-led action
- What we own is truly ours to do with as we choose—God values honesty over impressive giving
- Lying about money is common: claiming we gave more, saying we don't have any, or exaggerating deals
- Christians should live distinctively from the world, not blending in with the

crowd

- Strongholds are concrete mindsets contrary to God's Word that must be demolished with divine power
- True Christian community requires trust and surrender, which involves risk and potential hurt
- The new year offers opportunity to ask God what would bring Him joy in our lives

Scripture Reference:

- Lamentations 3:22-23 (God's compassions never fail)
- Acts 4:32-37 (The early church's unity and generosity; Barnabas sells his field)
- Acts 5:1-11 (Ananias and Sapphira's deception and death)
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (Spiritual warfare and demolishing strongholds)
- Deuteronomy 8 (God gives ability to produce wealth)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal experience with his father tithing 20% of gross income after expenses
- Illustration of children saying "mine" when sharing toys at Christmas
- The pastor's confession about coming home brain-dead and wanting to watch TV instead of reading the Bible
- Personal testimony about experiencing grace through unexpected Christmas gifts
- The awkwardness of receiving gifts from people you didn't buy for as an analogy for God's grace
- Reference to car accidents that John, Tommy, and the pastor survived, causing them to question God's purpose for sparing them
- The ongoing conversation with his wife Julie about selling unused items in the basement
- Their 46-year marriage journey toward sharing everything in common