

# The Church: DEFINED

## Study Questions

### Week 9

The early church was nothing short of remarkable. Words like *supernatural, unity, love, community, generosity, and care* only begin to describe these first chapters of Acts. These are the kind of things we should long to experience ourselves. Not everything was roses, though. We've seen what opposition from the outside can look like as Peter and John experienced the disapproval of the religious authorities. This week, we see that it's not just those outside the community who might pose a threat.

**MAIN TEXT:** Acts 4:32-5:16

### CONNECT & OBSERVE

1. What did you find most significant from Sunday's sermon?
2. Read the passage in Acts. What questions come to mind as you consider these verses?

### LEARN

3. Acts 4:32-37 summarizes the state of this early community of believers. What qualities or commitments are expressed in these verses?
4. Compare and contrast the actions of Barnabas in 4:37-37 with those of Ananias and Sapphira in 5:1-2. What do you notice?
5. Ananias and Sapphira are held accountable in shocking fashion! What indicators can we see of the spiritual nature of what's happening? Pay close attention to verses 3-4 and 9.
6. Verses 12-16 summarize the response of the people in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. What key phrases or ideas stand out in these verses?

### APPLY

7. Verse 34 of chapter 4 says about the community of believers that, "There was not a needy person among them." What does this look like for us today at Calvary? What steps could we take to grow in this area?

8. Ananias and Sapphira claimed to be more generous and loving than they really were. It's likely that they also wanted to be viewed in a way that Barnabas would have been viewed. What is your reaction to their sudden deaths?<sup>1</sup>

9. What can we learn and apply from the account of Ananias and Sapphira about the Holy Spirit's awareness of and involvement in our church community?

10. John Stott observed that, "If the devil's first tactic was to destroy the church by force from without, his second was to destroy it by falsehood from within."<sup>2</sup> What kind of "outside" and "inside" influences threaten our church today? Close your time with prayer that God would protect us from these and that we would be faithful to follow Him.

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<sup>1</sup> NT scholar David Peterson writes, "Ananias and Sapphira disregarded the presence of God in the Christian community, the sacredness of that fellowship in God's eyes, and the relational aspect of their sin. They failed to discern that a deliberate act of deceit against the church was a sin against the Lord of the church" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, 208). Darrell Bock adds, "There is a spiritual element to life in community alongside the human dimension. Satan is trying to undermine what the community represents" (*Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 222).

<sup>2</sup> *The Message of Acts*, Bible Speaks Today, 112.