

Sermon Date: September 22, 2013
The Awesome Presence of God – Acts 5:1-16
Brian Fuery

1. Read Acts 5:1-11. Can you relate to the “fear that came over the whole church” (v. 11) after the death of Ananias and Sapphira?
2. Now read Acts 4:32-37 with a special emphasis on verses 4:36-37. What was the mood and momentum of the new believers at that time? What was God up to?
3. Now read Acts 5:1-4 in connection with the momentum mentioned above ***particularly in context of the entire narrative*** of the Spirit moving and in people’s hearts changing. If we look through the lens of the contiguous story of God in Acts 4:32 through 5:11 how might we view this situation differently? (*The event is what it is, the story cannot change, however our perception of the event will dictate our beliefs about what it means*).
4. Brian made an interesting observation that Ananias and Sapphira might have been motivated by a need to compare themselves to Barnabas (v. 36-37). Why is it possible that looking good for Ananias and Sapphira was more attractive than participating in what God was doing? Do we do that?
5. Brian pointed out that being fake destroys closeness, oneness and community. Put another way, our degree of authentic connection is directly proportional to the degree we feel safe to share our struggles, disappointments and doubts with one another. Safety is a gauge for intimacy. Do you agree? Is there a time when you’ve experienced this?

- a. See Luke 18:10-14. What does Jesus mean by this?
- b. See the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. What was going on with the older brother of the prodigal?

Personal Challenge Question:

In what type of environment do you find it emotionally safe to share your struggles? How can we create an environment of safety for one another?

- 6. Acts 5:12-16 records an amazing time of signs, wonders and healings taking place in the church. N.T. Wright writes: "...so many people coming to Jerusalem and being cured was not simply a matter of a sudden burst of healing energy. It was about ...an establishment of a new reality in a dangerous place; the power of the living God becoming concrete, definite, undeniable...It is when the church, through prayer and wisdom and often in the teeth of opposition, acts with decisive power in the real world – to build and run a successful school, or medical clinic; to free slaves or remit debts; to establish a housing project for those who can't afford local rents, or a credit union for those ashamed to go into a bank; to enable drug users and pushers to kick the habit and the lifestyle; to see hardened and violent criminals transformed by God's love – that people will take the message of Jesus seriously. God's power will be at work and people will know it." (N.T. Wright, Acts for Everyone, pg 85-86) Think and pray through how this can look for us today. What is our challenge?