

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 5 – Empowered for Holiness

Acts 5:1–16

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit forms believers into lives marked by integrity, honesty, humility, and spiritual authenticity. Participants will examine the difficult story of Ananias and Sapphira and reflect on the difference between genuine spiritual transformation and outward religious performance.

The goal of this session is not fear, shame, or legalism.

Instead, participants should begin understanding that the Holy Spirit was not given merely to create spiritual experiences or emotional moments.

The Holy Spirit transforms people from the inside out.

Acts 5 reminds believers that:

- God desires truthfulness,
- the Spirit forms authenticity rather than image management,
- and spiritual maturity requires honesty before God.

This session also helps participants distinguish between:

- conviction and condemnation,
 - holiness and perfectionism,
 - and transformation versus performance.
-

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand holiness as transformation rather than legalism
- Recognize the difference between authenticity and spiritual performance
- Reflect honestly on areas of hiding, fear, or image management
- Explore how the Holy Spirit produces conviction and growth
- Understand why integrity matters in Christian witness
- Recognize holiness as ongoing formation into the likeness of Jesus

KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 5:1–16

Supporting Passages:

- Psalm 51:6
- 1 John 1:5–9
- Proverbs 10:9
- Galatians 5:22–25
- Hebrews 12:28–29
- Matthew 5:8

SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on group discussion and pacing.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
- Participant Study Guide
- Pen or journal
- Comfortable discussion environment
- Optional whiteboard or notepad for key themes

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 5:1–16 slowly and prayerfully
- Reflect honestly on the difference between authenticity and performance in your own spiritual life
- Prepare for participants carrying:
 - shame

- church hurt
- perfectionism
- fear of vulnerability
- or unhealthy past experiences involving holiness teaching

Important:

This session should NOT feel:

- harsh,
- condemning,
- fear-driven,
- or legalistic.

The focus is:

- honesty,
- integrity,
- spiritual authenticity,
- and openness to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Be careful not to over-sensationalize the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

The deeper issue is not punishment.

The deeper issue is truthfulness before God.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to live faithfully and courageously in the world. This week we look at how the Holy Spirit transforms believers inwardly through honesty, integrity, and spiritual authenticity.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- humility

- honesty
 - openness
 - healing
 - and willingness to grow.
-

2. OPENING REFLECTION: IMAGE VS. AUTHENTICITY (10 MINUTES)

Invite gentle reflection and discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do people often feel pressure to appear “put together” spiritually?
- What makes honesty and vulnerability difficult?
- What is the difference between authenticity and oversharing?
- Why do religious environments sometimes encourage performance?

Facilitator Guidance:

This conversation may touch deep emotional experiences.

Allow honesty without rushing to solutions.

Important:

The goal is not forced vulnerability.

The goal is helping participants reflect honestly about image management and spiritual authenticity.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 5:1–16 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- emotional tone
- contrasts in the passage
- what stands out
- and how the Holy Spirit is portrayed.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this passage feels most difficult or important to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT CARES ABOUT INTEGRITY (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit forms truthfulness and integrity rather than outward appearance.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 5:1–11
- Psalm 51:6
- Proverbs 10:9

Key Truths:

- The issue was dishonesty, not financial amount
- Ananias and Sapphira wanted the appearance of devotion without truthful surrender
- The Holy Spirit works in truth, not performance

Key Emphasis:

God is not interested in image management.

The Spirit forms people whose outward lives increasingly align with inward truthfulness.

Facilitator Insight:

Many people carry pressure to:

- appear spiritually mature,
- emotionally stable,
- or morally impressive.

Acts 5 challenges performative spirituality.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people often fear honesty?
- What causes spiritual performance in church environments?
- Why does integrity matter in spiritual life?

5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT FORMS AUTHENTICITY, NOT PERFECTION (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Holiness is not pretending struggle does not exist.

Read Scripture:

- 1 John 1:5–9

Key Truths:

- Spiritual growth begins with honesty
- Conviction is different from condemnation
- The Holy Spirit transforms what believers bring truthfully before God

Key Emphasis:

Holiness is not:

- flawless behavior,
- spiritual image,
- or emotional perfection.

Holiness is increasing openness to God's transforming work.

Facilitator Guidance:

Some participants may carry shame from unhealthy church experiences.

Avoid:

- guilt-driven teaching,
- perfectionism,
- or pressure toward emotional exposure.

Emphasize grace and transformation.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between conviction and shame?
- Why do people sometimes hide struggle spiritually?
- How does honesty help spiritual growth?

6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES REVERENCE, NOT FEARFUL PERFORMANCE (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Acts 5 reminds believers that God's presence is holy and not casual.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 5:11
- Hebrews 12:28–29

Key Truths:

- Reverence means recognizing God's holiness and presence

- The Holy Spirit is not a tool for spiritual image or self-promotion
- Healthy reverence produces humility and attentiveness

Key Emphasis:

The fear of the Lord in Scripture often means:

- awe,
- reverence,
- and awareness of God’s holiness.

Facilitator Insight:

Modern culture often treats spirituality casually or performatively.

Acts calls believers toward deeper sincerity and attentiveness.

Discussion Questions:

- What emotions come to mind when you hear the word “holiness”?
- How is reverence different from fear-based religion?
- Why is humility important in spiritual life?

7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT FORMS HEALTHY WITNESS THROUGH TRANSFORMATION (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Integrity strengthens Christian witness.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 5:12–16
- Galatians 5:22–25

Key Truths:

- The Spirit forms believers whose lives increasingly reflect Jesus
- Authenticity strengthens trust and witness
- Spiritual fruit grows gradually over time

Key Emphasis:

The goal is not:

- becoming spiritually impressive,
- appearing perfect,

- or managing image.

The goal is becoming increasingly open to the Holy Spirit's transforming work.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section connects strongly to modern disillusionment with Christianity.

Many people reject churches because of:

- hypocrisy,
- manipulation,
- or lack of authenticity.

Discussion Questions:

- How does integrity affect Christian witness?
 - Which fruit of the Spirit do you most long to see grow in your life?
 - Why does authenticity matter in spiritual community?
-

8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit was not given merely to create powerful moments.

The Spirit transforms people.

Holiness is not:

- image management,
- perfectionism,
- or spiritual performance.

Holiness is ongoing transformation through honesty, grace, surrender, and dependence on God.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit forms truthful, humble, authentic people whose lives increasingly reflect the character of Jesus.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

What would greater honesty and openness before God look like in your life right now?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 5:1–16 daily
- Reflect honestly on areas of hiding or performance
- Pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me become truthful and open before God.”

- Practice one intentional act of honesty, humility, or integrity this week

Encourage attentiveness rather than shame or pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- honesty
- humility
- healing
- integrity
- and openness to transformation

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to continue forming participants into people marked by authenticity, grace, and truthfulness.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

Do not allow this session to become:

- fear-driven,
- legalistic,
- or emotionally manipulative.

The goal is not:

“Try harder to appear holy.”

The goal is:

“Become more open to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.”

Keep the tone:

- calm
- grace-filled
- reflective
- and centered on spiritual authenticity.

If participants leave:

- less afraid of honesty,
- more aware of the difference between performance and transformation,
- and more open to Spirit-led growth,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the conversation centered on:

- grace,
- truth,
- humility,
- and Spirit-dependent living.

© 2026 Sven Verbeet – St. John's United Church

This material may be shared and used for personal study, small groups, or ministry purposes with attribution. It may not be sold or republished without permission.