

**James 4:14a** Such a kind who do not understand what kind of life ... yours tomorrow. (EXT)

1. There is an ellipsis in this verse and the translators assumed missing words needed to be provided. However, the original text must remain as is and recognized in the exegesis.
2. Reversionists simply do not have a clue what their life is going to be like tomorrow. They have thought themselves into a spiral of discipline.
3. They may make their plans but the discipline from reversionism is taking them in a completely opposite direction, and allowed to continue, will result in the sin unto death.
4. Consequently, they do not understand what tomorrow will bring. They have assumed grandiose tomorrows will soon reveal the glorious revelation of their cosmic imagination only to be crushed by the intervention of divine justice.
5. There is a stark example of how reversionists conjure a way to acquire money while making it appear they are doing good deeds for the church.
6. Following the Lord's ascension into the Third Heaven, believers came together and formed the Church Age's first church which was located in Jerusalem and ultimately under the teaching ministry of James.
7. Those who were believers joined with the intent to form a congregation which could function as one in the process of accumulating all believers into the teaching ministries of the apostles and prophets and later the evangelists and pastor-teachers.
8. In forming this church these new believers began to take seriously the opportunity they had to expand their historical impact in Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond. The intent was to finance the communication gifts possessed by those with them and encourage each other to do personal evangelism.
9. The mental attitude possessed by these people is illustrated by the man who became a central figure in the early church. In fact, the last two verses of Acts 4:36–37 would be better placed as the first two verses of chapter 5.
10. What follows is background on this man with two names: Joseph and Barnabas:

**BARNABAS. (Βαρνάβας), “son of exhortation.” This name was applied to the associate of Paul, who was originally called Jōses or Joseph (Acts 4:36), as a testimony to his eloquence. Its literal meaning is “son of prophecy.” This is interpreted in Acts 4:36 as “son of exhortation.”**

The office of a prophet being more than to foretell, all these interpretations are admissible in estimating Barnábas as a preacher. “[Adolf] Deissmann considers Barnábas the Jewish Grécized form of Barnebaus, a personal Semitic name recently discovered in Asia Minor inscriptions, and meaning the “son of Nebo.”

He was a Levite from the island of Cypress, and cousin of the evangelist Mark. When we first learn of him, he had removed to Jerusalem, and acquired property there. He sold “a field,” and contributed its price to the support of the poorer members of the church (Acts 4:36 ff).

When the preaching of some of the countrymen of Barnábas had begun a movement toward Christianity among the Greeks of Antioch, Barnábas was sent from Jerusalem to give it encouragement and direction, and, after a personal visit, recognizing its importance and needs, sought out Paul at Tarsús, and brought him back as his associate.

Ordained as missionaries on their return (Acts 13:3), and accompanied by John Mark, they proceeded upon what is ordinarily known as the “First Missionary Journey” of Paul (Acts 13:4.5).<sup>1</sup>

**NOTE:** To avoid confusion I will keep the chapter and verse structure where the Bible has them, yet understand the full context is necessary.

**Acts 4:36** Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

**v. 37** and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

**Acts 5:1** A certain man named Ananiás, with his wife, Sapphīra, sold a piece of property,

**v. 2** and kept back some of the price, with his wife’s full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles’ feet.

**v. 3** But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?”

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<sup>1</sup> H. E. Jacobs, “Barnabas,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, James Orr, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 1:405.

**Acts 5:4** “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own land? And after it was sold, was it, the money, not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

**v. 5** And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

**v. 6** The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

**v. 7** Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

**v. 8** And Peter responded to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.”

**v. 9** Then Peter said to her, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.”

**v. 10** And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

**v. 11** And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of those things. (NASB)

### Synopsis:

1. Ananias was evidently a man who had established himself as a major contributor to the church in Jerusalem and news that Barnabas had just made a large contribution to the church motivated him and his wife to do him one better.
2. Ananias’s actions, after learning of Barnabas’s significant gift, inspired him to get in the game of one-upmanship, a term that means “to keep a step ahead of one’s competitor by recourse to claims, challenges or techniques that succeed whether or not they are entirely ethical.”<sup>2</sup>
3. Ananias and Sapphira also had a nice piece of property which they chose to sell. But their sale amounted to more money than Barnabas’s contribution, so they only gave the amount that exceeded his.

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<sup>2</sup> William Morris and Mary Morris, “one-upmanship” in *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 426.

4. We learn from Chapter Five, verse 2, that Ananias kept back some of the sale price for himself about which Sapphira was well aware. The rest is the amount Ananias handed over to Peter.
5. The principle here has nothing to do with the amount of money the couple gave to the Jerusalem church. The issue was the mental attitude by which it was given. The exchange was something like, “Peter, I sold some property and I’ve given the money to the church.”
6. Principle: It is Ananias’s money. He is free to do with it as he wishes. Giving it to the church is his business. What is wrong is the fact he not only lied to Peter, but most importantly to the Holy Spirit.
7. Peter is an apostle. Peter knows better than to fiddle with God’s money. The money is designed to sustain these new believers who are focused on evangelizing the people of Jerusalem, Palestine, and beyond.
8. Ananias is only interested in being looked up to by the people of Jerusalem. Thus, the money, his money, that he gave to Peter was not what he and his wife pretended it to be.
9. Instead, his contribution was intended to be more than the sum given to Peter by Barnabas. Wrong motivation resulted in the divine sentence of the sin unto death.
10. For a review of this “execution,” see Acts: Chapter Five, verses 3 through 5, posted above. What happens next is the indictment and execution of Sapphira.
11. About three hours later Sapphira shows up, but ignorant of her husband’s execution under the sin unto death. In verse 8, Peter confronts her with this question: “Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And Sapphira said, “Yes, that was the price.”  
Resultant verdict: “Liar, liar, pants on fire!”
12. Peter knows how much the property was worth, but Ananias lied to him about the price for which he sold it while insinuating that it was the full price. Peter is an apostle. Ananias, by lying to Peter, simultaneously lied to the Holy Spirit.
13. Sapphira, in cahoots with Ananias in their scheme, has entrapped herself with a boldfaced lie to which Peter responds, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.”
14. And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband (Acts 5:10).

15. These two executions are illustrations of capital punishment. What were the crimes which were committed that were considered to be capital? It had nothing to do with the money.
16. Ananias and Sapphira owned the property they sold. The buyer considered it to be a fair price so he was pleased with the purchase.
17. The money he paid to the couple became theirs. They were free to do with it as they pleased. Yet, at this point, the real reason they made the sale was to get some ready cash to out-give Barnabas.
18. It has nothing to do with helping the believers of Jerusalem evangelize the lost souls of Jerusalem and its environs. Instead, it was really about maintaining their high place on the list of The Top Givers to the Jerusalem Church.
19. Wrong motivation resulted in divine discipline executed by the Holy Spirit in the form of the sin unto death.
20. This couple is said by Peter to have conspired against the Holy Spirit:  
**Acts 5:3** Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds from the sale of the land?”
21. Contributions to the Jerusalem church were intended to finance the outreach of those who would spread the gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. Those who responded positively would become members of the church where they would grow in grace under the ministries of a prophet, an evangelist, or pastor-teacher, e.g., James.
22. The money collected was the result of free-will offerings willingly given by the volitional decisions of believers. That money was for the purpose of enlarging the resources necessary to get the Word out to whosoever would give it a hearing.
23. Ananias and Sapphira’s “contribution” did not have this goal as their objective but rather a means to aggrandize themselves among the congregation. Had they not been disciplined then their influence would have had a negative impact on the legitimate reasons for its existence.
24. Ananias and Sapphira were Lucifer’s “inside agents” who he had selected to become his agents provocateurs among the congregation. They did play their parts well but the Holy Spirit intervened by the hand of Peter and both were executed by means of the sin unto death.