

What Might Ananias and Sapphira Say to Hillary Clinton?

When my oldest son, Justin, was seven years old he gave a masterful reply when a waitress asked him if he would like some sumptuous dessert.

Minutes before he had conveyed that he was “absolutely stuffed” when we prodded him to finish up the food on his plate. So what was the miraculous turn of events that made him so receptive to the New York style cheesecake planted seductively before him on that silver tray?

You could almost see the wheels spinning in his little mind as he responded with a mischievous smile, “Well... the dinner room in my stomach is all full but the dessert room is still empty, so you can give me a slice!”

Even though Jesus told us, “Do not judge according to appearance but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24), when a clever kid comes up with this kind of ingenious response, it’s hard not to yield as you bust out in a belly laugh.

Once in a while, excusing something inconsequential like the above is probably harmless. Yet in adulthood when stakes are high and issues of ethics and integrity impact other people’s lives, we must steer clear of all duplicity and deceitfulness. God takes this very seriously as documented by a medical doctor in the Book of Acts.

The First Recorded Sin in the Life of the Church

The first mention of sin and the term “church” in Acts is in the fifth chapter. The latter is cited in verse 11, “Great

fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.”

As Christianity was being launched, there was such a high level of purity and power on display that “many miraculous signs and wonders” () occurred; “no one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people” (); “more and more men and women believed in the Lord...” (); and, “Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed” ().

This description of the early Christian church took place immediately after a couple by the name of Ananias and Sapphira experienced divine discipline. His name means “the Lord is gracious” and hers “beautiful”, but the narrative unfolds a chilling yet factual account of their judgment for trying to manufacture an image not rooted in truth.

As part of the covenant community that agreed to voluntarily share possessions in common and help the less fortunate in their midst (Acts 4:34-37), this power couple sold some real estate, projected an image of giving everything, yet cleverly concealed the truth as they held back some for themselves.

Ananias and Sapphira had every right to keep back whatever amount they chose, but to dishonestly give the inflated impression that they were giving all when they had not was the sin of deceit. They both paid dearly for their deliberate deception as the account reveals.

Here’s the deal: Because of a lack of a healthy fear of God in our society plus our casual approach to sin, the narrative seems severe. Yet the closer we get to the return of Jesus at the end of the age, shouldn’t we expect to see similar activity of a holy God simultaneous to an increase in signs, wonders and the miraculous?

We want the latter but are we ready to accept the former as

God awakens and restores His true Church? Are we candidates for God's pruning so we can drop the masks, stop man-pleasing, renounce the fear of man and simply rest in being who God uniquely designed us to be?

The Security of an Honest Life

When I'm asked about my personal life I try to be forthright. I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, where my mom, who was disabled, worked three days a week scrubbing floors on her knees. My father was a Polish immigrant who did not finish high school but made an honest living as a custodian in a nearby bank.

My sister and I grew up in our small home without air conditioning. My parents never owned an automobile. We never went on a vacation. Our family struggled yet stayed close.

My parents are now both in heaven and I've been married for 38 years to a wonderful wife. We have grown children and small grandchildren with another one on the way!

We live in a modest home and both drive reliable 2000 Honda cars. I've been in vocational ministry for 42 years and one year ago transitioned from local church involvement to serve the wider Body of Christ. We have no church-based salary but enjoy the adventure of ministry partnership with faithful friends undergirding us in this new season of life.

That's it! That's my upbringing and current station in life. There's no need to project some artificial image or try to impress anybody. In Christ, I am secure and enjoying the abundant life Jesus promised. If I were to be engaged by Ananias and his wife I would have nothing to fear.

Hillary, Hard Choices and Hypocrisy?

This conveniently brings us to our punished pair's imagined interaction with Mrs. Clinton who was raised in a Methodist church, professes to be a Christian and reportedly keeps a

pocket New Testament in her purse. At present she is touring the nation drumming up interest in her book, *Hard Choices*, and remaining noncommittal regarding any possible run for the presidency.

Hillary Clinton is everywhere these days. She's smiling on the cover of *People* magazine and displayed on the inside at her kitchen sink, sitting in a chair with her dog and strolling through her garden.

In picture after picture and interview after interview, the former First Lady conveys the carefully crafted image of a motherly, down-to-earth, common American with whom everyone can relate, who really understands the average person and who struggles like everyone with financial challenges and debt.

"When we left the White House we were not only dead broke but in debt," Hillary said on national TV. Later she stated, "I think if you come from where I came from... talking with our neighbors or going shopping..."

Pleading poverty upon leaving the White House and painting the sympathetic picture that she understands the problems faced by millions of Americans today, Hillary Rodham Clinton would have some "splainin' to do" if confronted by Ananias and Sapphira. In her posh neighborhoods and with her almost nonstop travels are we supposed to believe she's hanging out with folks at Winn-Dixie or 7-11? Backpedaling later and trying to defuse the remarks by calling them "inartful" warrants a little more attention, wouldn't you agree?

It reminds me of the recent disclosure in divorce proceedings of extreme liberal filmmaker, Michael Moore, being worth over \$50 million, yet the misleading image he portrays as he "blasts capitalism" is that of an unshaven, poor slob down in the bowery. His faded cap and baggy, old jeans persona is a far cry from the truth now coming to the public eye.

Peggy Noonan, *Wall Street Journal* columnist and author of *When*

Character Was King, said, "Clinton seems to have a peculiar and unattractive relationship with money. She wants it, and she doesn't want you to know. She also appears to think she's entitled to it, as a public servant who operated at higher levels."

A *Washington Times* editorial stated, "Bubba and Hillary set out to do good and have done well, but they've made careers of trying to paint as villains the conservatives and Republicans who have done well too... Americans are utterly contemptuous of hypocrites."

Seeing Behind the Smoke and Mirrors

Remember the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*? To get back home, Dorothy had to get beyond the mean old Wicked Witch of the West with her flying monkey entourage and her intimidating pea-green face. She also had to get behind the smoke and mirrors to expose the manipulative and phony Wizard.

As we proceed, we must do likewise. Remember the famous quote of President John F. Kennedy: "The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, or dishonest, but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion, without the discomfort of thought."

"Just the facts!" was the famous line spoken repeatedly by Jack Webb on the early crime drama, *Dragnet*. So what are the facts behind the image?

- Hillary grew up in a well-off family and went to the exclusive Wellesley private college, which now costs almost \$60,000 annually. While there she did her thesis on the radical, profane socialist Saul Alinsky whose book, *Rules for Radicals* (dedicated to Lucifer) greatly influenced both her and Barack Obama regarding manipulating the masses to achieve one's goals.
- When Bill was governor of Arkansas, Hillary lived in a

mansion and there, as throughout most of her adult life, was chauffeured about in limousines.

- Although there may have been a brief cash-flow problem upon leaving the White House, Hillary's book advance was \$8 million; as Secretary of State she derived nearly \$800,000; their financial disclosure for 2001–12 was \$163 million; they have two lavish residences as well as income from investments, property, book royalties and those famous speaking engagements. Both of them make millions from their lectures (Hillary was given over \$300,000 from UCLA and the University of Nevada set her fee at over \$200,000!). *The Washington Post* reported Bill's speeches alone brought in \$104.9 million!
- Their daughter Chelsea is married to a Wall Street investment banker and they live in a Manhattan condo worth \$10 million. With almost no broadcasting experience, Chelsea was hired by NBC at \$600,000 a year.

Here's the Honorable Deal

God wants to bless His children for honest work and generosity. Ananias and Sapphira weren't judged for their prosperity but their duplicity. If transported to the present I believe they'd appeal to Mrs. Clinton to cease projecting an image not rooted in reality.

If they were able to return, maybe they'd be accompanied by Methodist founder John Wesley who might add a final caution for Hillary and all of us as well. "As riches increase, so will pride, anger and love of the world in all its branches."

Might John have been speaking prophetically here regarding "branches"—branches of government?