

Acts 8

Learning

Engaging Acts 8:4-40 (some content you can use to prep and/or use as a group)

- **Recap:** We are now in the second literary section of Acts (6:8-9:31:) where **the Church is established beyond Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria**
- **Scripture** - Prayer for Guidance, then read Acts 8:4-40 (4 minutes)
- **Context:** The main character of this section is Philip who was one of the seven Greek speaking Jews appointed a leader in previous chapters.
- **Interesting Words:** The Ethiopian *Eunuch* is clearly a “God Fearer,” meaning someone who believes in the God of Israel. He would have been unable to actually convert to Judaism because of his condition as a Eunuch (one who has either by birth or procedure removed their reproductive organs). The very section of Isaiah that he was reading speaks of a future day where there will be a place for both the foreigner and the eunuch in the house of Israel or more broadly the “People of God.”
- **Culture:** The Samaritans also had a strong expectancy for a coming Messiah whom they called the *Taeb*, meaning “the one who restores.”
- **Themes:** This whole section of Acts demonstrates an important missiological idea. In the modern age we typically think of missionaries as those who cross huge cultural gaps to reach a different people group. To be sure, that is a key and necessary part of “mission.” This section also shows how God uses the appointing and commissioning of Greek speaking Jews to begin spreading the Gospel in the Greek speaking world beyond Jerusalem, thus mission also involves using our natural cultural similarities to others to spread the Gospel of Jesus in word and deed. This section also introduces some stories regarding baptism with water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We will see other stories coming later in acts that differ from the order here. The one thing we can conclude for sure is that the Holy Spirit is free to decide where and when to pour out and become manifest. It could be before water baptism, after water baptism, or at the same time. Be careful of turning these stories into rigid formulas!
- **Quote for expanding the discussion:**
“In studying the history of the Church and its missionary progress, we repeatedly see that the great movements, the most notable discoveries of unsuspected dimensions of the gospel and of obedience to it, usually appear not at the centers but at the margins, at the periphery.” Justo Gonzalez

Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- What stands out to you from these exemplary stories of the Gospel spreading beyond Jerusalem?
- Think of the cultural power disparity between Simon the Magician and Simon the poor fisherman, now called Peter. What do you think is Simon the Magician's error or misunderstanding of the Gospel?
- How do you respond to the blatant supernatural aspects of these stories?

Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- **Reflect:** Thinking of the two Simon's in this passage, where does your sense of value, direction and authority reside? Does it come from the Holy Spirit or from a societal scale of values and significance?
- **Reflect:** Read the quote above and think about the fact that the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy from Isaiah 56:3-5 happens on an obscure desert road with two rather unknown people having a side conversation. Do you agree or believe Justo is right? Are you content to exercise faithful mission as part of a creative minority on the margins of society? Discuss together.
- **Respond:** What groups of people has God uniquely positioned you to naturally reach and connect with? What are you or can you continue to be intentional about
- **During the Week:** Be reading Acts 6:8-9:31

Scriptures

Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria

[Act 8:4](#) Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

[Act 8:5](#) Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.

[Act 8:6](#) When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said.

[Act 8:7](#) For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

[Act 8:8](#) So there was great joy in that city.

Simon the Magician Believes

[Act 8:9](#) Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great,

[Act 8:10](#) and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God."

[Act 8:11](#) They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.

[Act 8:12](#) But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[Act 8:13](#) Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

[Act 8:14](#) When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.

[Act 8:15](#) When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,

[Act 8:16](#) because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[Act 8:17](#) Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

[Act 8:18](#) When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money

[Act 8:19](#) and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

[Act 8:20](#) Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!

[Act 8:21](#) You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.

[Act 8:22](#) Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

[Act 8:23](#) For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

[Act 8:24](#) Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

[Act 8:25](#) After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

[Act 8:26](#) Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

[Act 8:27](#) So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,

[Act 8:28](#) and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

[Act 8:29](#) The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

[Act 8:30](#) Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

[Act 8:31](#) "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

[Act 8:32](#) This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

[Act 8:33](#) In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

[Act 8:34](#) The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"

[Act 8:35](#) Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

[Act 8:36](#) As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"

[Act 8:38](#) And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

[Act 8:39](#) When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

[Act 8:40](#) Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.