

STUDY GUIDE

Reading for week 6: Acts 8:1-25



WHATS THE STORY?

As a large-scale persecution breaks out against the Christians in Jerusalem, many believers flee into the surrounding areas. With this, however, comes blessing and reconciliation: with the baptism of the Samaritans and the gift of the Spirit, ancient broken relationships are restored.

LECTIO DEVINA

Prepare: Find a calm and quiet place to read and absorb the passage.

Read: Read through the passage. Listen for any words or phrases that jump out and listen for what God has to say.

Reflect: Try to understand what God could be saying to you through this passage.

Respond: Journal or pray to God, communicating about what you think God was telling you through Scripture.

Rest: Spend time contemplating, allowing God to work.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How has God used the hurts in your life for your benefit and the benefit of his Kingdom?
- Who in your life do you need to reconcile with?



FAMILY STUDY

Discuss: Who is Saul?

How did the believers respond to being persecuted?

Why couldn't Simon buy the power of the Holy Spirit?

A Deeper Look

Stephen's death seemed to spark something terrible in the Jewish authorities. They began the push to eradicate the resurrection message from Jerusalem. Because of this, believers fled out of Jerusalem and into Judea and Samaria. Through this, Jesus' instructions at the very beginning of Acts are coming to fruition: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

After Luke's dramatic introduction to Saul in Chapter 7, Luke tells us that Saul was one of the zealous Jewish leaders trying to halt the Christian message. We are told that Saul led a house to house raid, throwing Christians in prison as he went. The Apostles stayed, and other believers that fled preached wherever they went, bringing to mind Joseph's sentiment in Genesis, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20)

As the message of Christ spreads outward, we will continue to meet characters like Simon the Sorcerer who was renowned for his mystical powers, even being called "the Great Power of God" (8:10) by the people in his region. Simon heard the message being preached by Phillip about Christ and responded by being baptized. Luke tells us that he followed Phillip everywhere he went as he was amazed by the power he was seeing. The Holy Spirit by way of Phillip pushed outwards even into Samaria. This inspired the Apostles to send Peter and John out to help lead the charge. They came into contact with Simon when Simon witnessed them lay hands on others to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Simon offered to purchase this power, most likely with funds he got from swindling his peers, Peter reacted harshly. Peter angrily advised that Simon repent and hope for forgiveness. Simon asked Peter and John to pray on his behalf, and Luke ends the story of Simon there, inspiring us to ponder Simon's fate and the meaning of repentance.

Peter and John head back to Jerusalem, two Jewish men preaching their way through Samaria village by village on their way back.