

The Hand of God, Moves the Church

Circle Group Questions

Acts 8

Icebreaker: Describe a time in your life, when something you thought was terrible happened, but it worked out to your benefit in the long run.

Summary of Acts 2-7:

- In Acts 2, Peter addresses the crowd and states that Jesus was handed over to the people by God, and with the help of wicked men, was put to death on the cross. The people's reaction is that they were "cut to the heart", and asked, "Brothers what shall we do?"
- In chapter 4, Peter and John address the Sanhedrin, saying, "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." Their reaction was to threaten them not to teach in the name of Christ.
- In Chapter 6, the leaders had the Apostles arrested again. The leaders say to the Apostles, "We told you not to preach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."
- In Acts Chapter 7, Stephen reviews the history of the leadership of Israel, concluding with, the leaders never saw what God was doing among His people, and they fought against God's messengers. Stephen concludes with an indictment of the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:51-53, saying that they are always stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears. Just like your fathers, you always resist the Holy Spirit. He ended with you betrayed and murdered the Righteous one.
- Their reaction is that they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. When Stephen proclaimed that he saw "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God", they rushed Stephen and stoned him to death.

1. Why do you think that the people were open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and willing to repent (Acts 2), but the Jewish leadership resisted the Holy Spirit, and were unwilling to repent? (Acts 4, 6&7) Why is it that those who taught the scriptures were the last ones open to conviction and repentance?
2. Stephen's point was that the people who knew God's Word missed God's hand in history, and frequently fought against it. Do you see the hand of God in your life, or do you fight against what He is doing? Can you look back on your life and see God's hand in your suffering? Do you see spiritual progress because of your suffering? (2 Tim 3:12)
3. Do you see God's hand in the history and the present of America, or do political happenings upset you? What can you do to give your fear back to God and trust His plan for our nation?

I. Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem (Read 8:1-3)

The result of the persecution of the Jerusalem church was that the church was scattered throughout the land of Israel, as promised in Acts 1:8. The church moved from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and continued witnessing.

4. What happened just prior to initiate the persecution of the church? (Acts 7:54-59)
5. Why did it take persecution for the church to move out and be witnesses for Jesus?
6. How do you think that the Jerusalem church members felt about this persecution? (Matthew 5:11,12) How could they see God's hand in their fleeing Jerusalem? (Acts 1:8)
7. Consider the loss of Christian fellowship in your life because of the governor's mandate the last few months. Can you see the hand of God in the things that cause you pain? What good things have come from your pain? (Isaiah 55:8,9)

II. Philip Travels to Samaria (Read 8:4-8)

8. What is the Great Commission according to Matthew 28:18-20? What role do

you think you are to play in the Great Commission? (Matthew 4:19, Acts 1:8)

9. How competent are you at sharing the gospel? Giving your testimony? Would you be interested in a class where sharing your faith is part of the curriculum? If interested, please contact the church office.

III. Simon the Sorcerer (Read 8:9-25)

Simon the Sorcerer was a man who had impressed others so as to be important. In the account of Simon, Pastor Dave said that Simon the sorcerer wanted to buy God and add the power of God to his spirituality. Simon assumed that the Apostles had the same motives as he had. Simon offered them money to convey power to him. (Read the rebuke of Acts 8:20-23)

10. What is wrong with Simon's attempt at buying the gift of God? What does this indicate about Simon's heart? (Acts 8:20-23)

11. How can self-interest affect one's response to the Gospel and the Holy Spirit? How do we guard against selfishness affecting our faith?

12. Pastor Dave mentioned our culture has normalized other sources of information such as astrology, mediums, horoscopes. What sources of information compete with God for Truth in our culture? (i.e. science, politics, etc.) What can we do to ensure that we walk in faith and reject anti-God messages? (Psalm 119:9-11, Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:10-18)

IV. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Read 8:26-40)

Philip was led by an angel to take the road from Jerusalem to Gaza that the Ethiopian eunuch was on. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading the book of Isaiah, a section about the Messiah. As Philip walked alongside the chariot, he heard the eunuch reading and understood the language. Philip reached out to the eunuch and asked if he understood. Philip then explained the meaning of the passage and how it related to the Messiah.

13. What does the fact that the eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was reading Isaiah say about the eunuch? Why did the Ethiopian eunuch want to be baptized after hearing the gospel? What does this indicate about his character? Have you been obedient to the command to be baptized?

14. What does this passage say about the sovereignty of God? How does this story show how God will orchestrate events to accomplish His will and bring those to Him who will believe?

15. How was Philip especially equipped for the meeting with the eunuch? What can we do to ensure we are better equipped?