

Spiritual Growth Resources: From Discipleship to Apostleship

Acts of the Church

Early Church Faith for Today



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Brief overview of chapters 8 and 9

Chapter 8 is like a parenthesis to the story of Saul. Chapter 7 ends with Saul and Acts 8:1 begins with Saul “consenting to” Stephen’s stoning. Then the story moves on to Philip before it returns to Saul in chapter 9.

We are introduced to Philip. He was one of the seven deacons selected to assist in the daily distribution which affected the Greek widows. In chapter 8 his role seemed to have evolved towards evangelism. But because of the persecution that began after Stephen’s death, many believers were forced to leave Jerusalem and go into the surrounding area of Judea and over to Samaria. Jesus had already told the apostles that this would happen. They just didn’t know how they would go from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world.

Knowing the Word of God, **Growing** in our Faith, **Going** to share the good news.

K N O W | G R O W | G O

Beyond Jerusalem

K N O W

Read Acts 8-9

1. How did Stephan's stoning contribute to the spreading of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem? Acts 8:1-3.
 - A. His death sparked a persecution against the disciples and they left to other towns.
 - B. His death meant to stop people from speaking about Jesus, but it had the opposite effect.
 - C. People were inspired by Stephan's faithfulness.
 - D. Persecution usually leads to a more passionate faith.
 - E. Other.
2. What did the scattered believers do when they arrived in a new place? Acts 8:4.
 - A. They laid low until the persecution died out.
 - B. They "went about preaching the word."
 - C. They brought their faith and passion with them.
 - D. They remembered Jesus' words that they would be witnesses in Judea and Samaria.
 - E. Other.
3. Philip was one of the deacons chosen in Acts 6. What was his ministry characterized by in Acts 8:5-8?
 - A. Proclamation (Preaching).
 - B. Miracles - expelling "unclean spirits" and healing of paralyzed and lame.
 - C. Joy.
 - D. Other.
4. Compare Philip's description in Acts 8:6 with that of Simon in Acts 8:10.
 - A. They were able to command people's attention.
 - B. Philip had the power of God; Simon had the power of magic.
 - C. Simon only amazed people; Philip brought people to faith in Christ and baptism.
 - D. Simon made people dependent on signs; Philip's message brought joy.
 - E. Other.

5. Why was Simon willing to believe the Gospel and be baptized but when it came to receiving the Holy Spirit he tried to buy it? Acts 8:14-24.
 - A. Simon was still new to the faith.
 - B. His magical powers were recipes that he probably bought and thought the Holy Spirit was the same.
 - C. Believing and being baptized doesn't take away all of our wrong beliefs.
 - D. The practice of magic ("wickedness") is still part of who he is and needs repentance.
 - E. Other.
6. What does the story of Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch tell us about "hard to reach people"? Acts 8:26-40
 - A. God loves people more than we do.
 - B. Even people who practice sorcery can be touched by the message of Jesus Christ.
 - C. Important people in high government positions are seeking for God and they are just waiting for someone to open the Scriptures to them and help them understand.
 - D. We have to be ready at anytime to encounter people where they are and be willing to lead them to baptism.
 - E. Other.
7. What were the steps Philip followed which lead to the eunuch's baptism? Acts 8:26-40
 - A. Philip was paying attention to the Holy Spirit's leading.
 - B. Philip got close to the person along the way.
 - C. Philip overheard him reading the Bible and asked a question of curiosity.
 - D. Once Philip noticed he had an opportunity to share, he didn't hesitate.
 - E. Philip began with Scripture and told him about Jesus.
 - F. Other.
8. What do you think the eunuch did when he got back home to Ethiopia? Acts 8:39b.
 - A. He probably shared with the person riding the chariot.
 - B. He took the message to Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.
 - C. Probably became a spiritual advisor to Candace and had great influence upon how Ethiopia became a Christian country.
 - D. The eunuch became a more faithful steward and excelled in his job.
 - E. Other.
9. Why was the eunuch so joyful after his baptism? Acts 8:39
 - A. He had been trying to understand what he had been reading.
 - B. The eunuch was in Jerusalem seeking for answers.

- C. He was struck by the Scriptures that spoke of Jesus in the Old Testament.
- D. God had sent him Philip to the middle of nowhere. It was as if God himself had come down.
- E. Other.

10. After such an encounter with the eunuch, Philip could have taken a break from preaching and witnessing while walking the 50-mile coastal trail to his next appointment. What do you hear God saying to you about Acts 8:40?

- A. Ministry and preaching doesn't happen just in the places we are going to.
- B. God wants me to realize that ministry happens along the journey.
- C. If God sends me to "Caesarea" that doesn't mean there's nothing in between to do.
- D. Even as you take a walk along the coast (trail), God has people for you to talk to.
- E. Other.

G R O W

Being among the “scattered” doesn’t make you less of a disciple. The apostles did not leave Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). How does it feel when you are away from the comfort of your home? Imagine not knowing if you are ever going to go back. What would our first thought be? How long until I can get back home? What do I have to do to straighten things out to reestablish stability and be strong for my family?

The “scattered” were full of the Spirit, and they were preaching the word. Talk about **resiliency**. **Resiliency** is a term used to express how some people can “bounce back” after a trauma or an impactful adverse event. I came across the word resiliency many years ago. I was in the context of flooring. Resilient flooring is resistant to bumps, water, easier to install, adaptable, etc. But we are humans, and life’s bumps impact us each differently. Our upbringing, beliefs, and experiences contribute to how resilient we are. We can achieve a higher level of resiliency when we have a better support system, a greater sense of purpose, and have a connection with God. These are all environments in which we can grow. When a support system surrounds us, whether it be your family or your small group, or church, we can resist trials and tests and keep our focus on the big picture. When our beliefs and practice line up, we have a better sense of direction in life. Being connected to God in an authentic relationship gives us a greater perspective in life, and we can face challenges in a healthier way.

Being forced out of our comfort zone will help us know how resilient we are. These disciples had to leave Jerusalem because of their faith. As “scattered” people, they continued preaching the Gospel. Many weeks or months ago, these same disciples probably would have never even considered moving away. Now, they are moving because of the Gospel, and they are okay with it. They are not complaining or whining about how bad they have it.

Philip has grown. He started as a deacon helping in the daily distribution of food. He made sure the widows were treated fairly. Philip didn’t take long to find himself preaching the Gospel while helping in the Jerusalem “community services.” He started with the people God put in front of him. We don’t hear of Philip trying to get ahead of God. Philip was lead by the Spirit, and when the Spirit said it was time for the next step, Philip was ready.

The **deacon ministry** doesn't lose its purpose because Philip did the work of an evangelist. It heightens it. Deacons can preach too! Being a deacon gave Philip a training ground, and there he realized his calling.

Many of us would probably instead bypass the community services center and want to be in the middle of a Bible study, teaching, inviting someone to come to Jesus. Philip learned that ministry of the word, for him, began with the widows, the marginalized, and disenfranchised. To get to the major leagues, you need to go through the minor league. Very few people jump from high school or college right into the big leagues. God wants you wherever you are, and you are where God wants you. Don't try to rush out before it's time to move on.

In our shortsightedness, we think that someone like a sorcerer is too entrenched in those Satanic practices. Therefore, we will avoid even talking to him/her. On the other spectrum, we think that an upper class, government cabinet member, is too high up there to need God, and thus we avoid spiritual conversations with them.

We need to grow in this area of listening to the Spirit, prompting us to go to the unlikely-to-accept group of people. We will grow when we go. We will grow for having engaged the people God sent to us.

Growth in our knowledge of Scriptures is crucial for ourselves and also for those who "do not understand." We take the humble approach that we don't know it all either, but we will talk about the things we do know and pray for that which we do not understand (without making things up).

Lastly, **Simon** was a new believer who had to grow in knowledge and faith. He was probably more attracted to the Gospel because of signs and wonders. When Simon saw that the apostles were laying hands on people and receiving the Holy Spirit, jealousy could have crept in. Simon offered money so that he could also have the power of the Holy Spirit. Simon was quickly reprimanded and admonished. Once he was aware of his sin, he told Peter to pray for him.

How many Simons are there still in the church? These Simons are among the believers, even baptized, yet it would be easier for some to pay for power than yield to the Holy Spirit's power. Simon had not received the Holy Spirit because he would have misused the

power for selfish purposes. We don't hear more about Simon, but we could assume that he continued to grow in the faith or his desire for power eventually was stronger.

APPLY

1. How scattered do you feel and how does that effect your ability to share your faith?
2. Think about a job you didn't really want, but you are thankful for it.
3. How many times do you sense the Spirit telling you to stop somewhere, call/text someone and have you followed through with that lead?

G O

The Gospel to Samaria

Jesus had to go through Samaria on his way up to Galilee (John 4). There he met a woman at the well. We are very familiar with the encounter. Philip's preaching in Samaria was not something new. The Samaritan woman had lead many to Jesus. Jesus and the disciples stay for a couple of days there.

Now, years later, Philip arrives to proclaim the Gospel with more to say about Jesus. The work of healing and preaching that Jesus began had to continue. Philip picks up where Jesus left off. The Samaritans needed to hear about Jesus' death and resurrection. They had not received the Holy Spirit.

"We've been there before." "We've already done that." "We tried that before." Ever hear those words? Jesus had been to Samaria, and I would say he had been very successful. It was still necessary for new disciples to make new disciples in a land that needed it. These new disciples broke new ground in going to a place where Jews weren't welcomed (at least historically). But Jesus had opened the way for them, and now they had more access to the community and their hearts.

The Gospel to Ethiopia

Ethiopia is new territory, but Philip wouldn't need to go to Ethiopia. Instead, a high-ranking official who works for the queen will be the one to preach the Gospel in Ethiopia. God made sure Philip and the eunuch crossed paths while in Israel. A simple encounter leads to the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian. This "simple encounter" leads to more than the conversion of one person. The impact of one person coming to faith can have eternal consequences for a whole nation. Never underestimate the power of reaching one.

APPLY

1. Where is the Samaria for us?
2. Which boundary do we need to cross?
3. Are we waiting for persecution to break out before we go?
4. Would you like to be part of a class to learn how to share your faith? (Contact Pastor Pedro at ptrinidad@carmsda.org)

Scripture Memorization for this Week



Now
AN ANGEL OF
THE LORD
SAID TO PHILIP
"RISE AND GO."

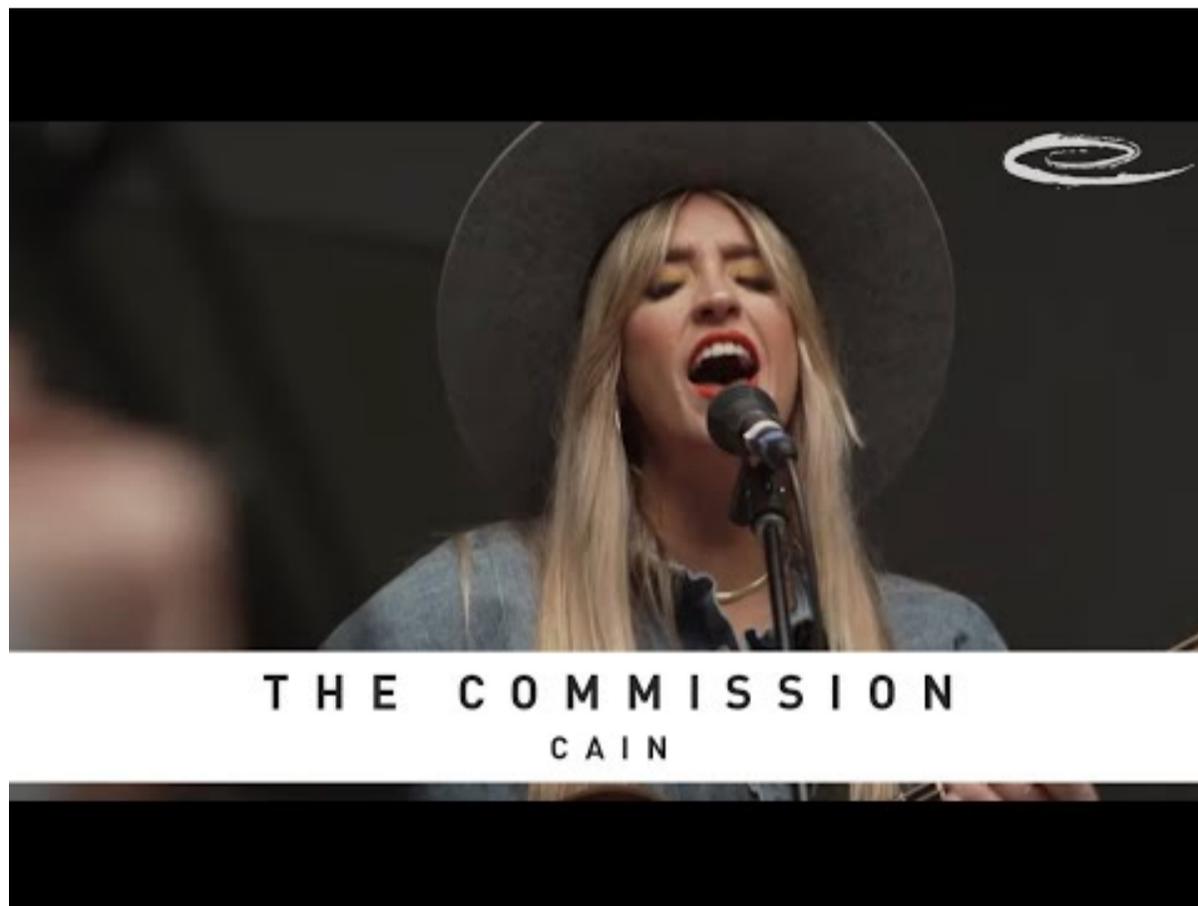
ACTS 8:26

Praise & Worship in Song

The Commission by YWAM Kona Music



The Commission by Cain



The Gospel by Ryan Stevenson

