

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Keith Simon | Acts 8:1-25 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: This section of Acts helps us codify God's bigger story of uniting different people through Jesus.

Icebreaker: What is one of your favorite fall activities to do as a group and why?

Discussion:

Transition: The story of the early church continues through the first part of Acts 8. We have seen how God's people have responded to Jesus' call to go and make disciples, effectively building His church. This week we get a taste of the types of people God has called to be a part of His church. We are introduced to Philip, who responds to Jesus' call to go to Samaria and preach the Gospel. Why was this such a big deal? Why would Luke include this short encounter and story? Why is it significant?

Read:

[Acts 8:1-8](#)

And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

1. Recap in your own words what is happening in this portion of the text. Who do we meet? What are they doing? What is the outcome? What stands out to you?
2. What is significant about this short story of Philip? Where did we meet him last?

Read:

Philip is largely unknown to this point in the bible, with his name only briefly being mentioned in Acts 6. He wasn't someone of significance, power, status, or money. He was ordinary. Chosen to serve God and His people in a specific time and place. Yet the Bible often talks about how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary works.

[1 Corinthians 1:27](#)

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Throughout the story of the Bible, it is clear that God will use a certain type of person to help accomplish His mission. 1 Cor. 1 says "foolish things". Typically these people aren't the people you and I would choose. Keith said in his sermon that while we look outwardly, God looks at the heart, choosing those who are fully yielding to Him. To yield means to give way to, usually under demand or pressure.

3. In what areas of your life is it hard to yield to God? Another way to ask this: What pressures or demands do you frequently try and solve on your own without looking to God?
4. How does this connect to our desire to live within our comfort zone?
5. What would you say the purpose of stepping outside of your comfort zone is?

God has a habit of sending people to do something outside of their comfort zone. The Old and New Testaments are filled with examples (Jonah, Israelites in Babylon during exile, Samaritans, etc) Yet, God works through all of these instances to accomplish His purpose in the world. While this is important, maybe even the most important part of these stories, there is something deeper for you and me to consider.

[Re-read Acts 8:1-3](#)

And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

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Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

6. How does the way Saul (Paul) treats those who are different than him juxtapose Philips's interactions?

We see that God's bigger story includes Jews and Gentiles, Samaritans, Barbarians, the upward mobile, and those living in poverty. Through Jesus, all are welcomed to the table to feast.

Keith mentioned that our deepest held affinities (political, social, work, play, etc) often become the litmus test for who we want to belong OVER our shared faith in Jesus. Yet Jesus said in John 13:35 that the world will know we are disciples of Christ by the way we love each other. This includes loving those who don't pass our tests.

7. How are you convicted by this idea that God plans to include people we often don't?

Read:

In Acts 8:14-17 we read that Peter and John were sent to check on the work Philip was doing and verify that what they heard was true. When they arrive they realize that what they heard is true, and praying for these men and women and laying hands on them they receive the Holy Spirit.

You may be wondering, why Peter and John have to come. Why was it that the Holy Spirit waited until the apostles were there? As Keith mentioned in his sermon this was to show that the Samaritans should be counted as full members of the one true church, the new covenant community of God's people, founded and based at that time in Jerusalem. Again, God was at work showing that His bigger story has purposes beyond ours.

8. What takeaways do you have from Philips's faithfulness to God's mission?
9. How does this story shape your prayers, thoughts, and, actions for this week?
10. Ask yourself, am I willing to extend love and grace to those who may hold opposing political or social views, recognizing that they too are made in the image of God?
How can I actively demonstrate this love?
11. How might your group answer those questions?

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Sharing and Prayer:

Offer prayers of confession for the ways you may fall short of God's vision for the lost. Ask God to continue to reveal to you how he wants to expand His kingdom and your role in it. Use the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:7, that God is the one with the all-surpassing power to unite those we often overlook.

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Then close in prayer with a word of affirmation and thanksgiving to God. He is in control and has chosen to use the "foolish things of this world" to accomplish His bigger story. Thank Him for Jesus and the truth that we are united to one another through the work of Christ.