

Icebreaker:

Have you ever been to a magic show or seen one on TV? What was your favorite trick?

Read and discuss:

1. In our Acts 6 study last week for home groups, you were asked to cook a meal or do housework for someone to ease their burdens. Were you able to do that? How was it?
2. The early Christians suffered persecution. Some were even dragged off and put in prison. Most of us have not been persecuted in this way; but have you ever felt persecuted, made fun of, or looked down on because of your faith?
3. In the eyes of the Jews, the Samaritans were 'outcasts,' 'impure' and 'enemies.' Who are the Samaritans in our lives? How does the teaching of Acts 8 guide the church's response to those who are outcasts among us today?
4. Is it possible to pursue God for the wrong reasons? What might be some of those reasons? From the text what might have been some of Simon's reasons?
5. Simon, the sorcerer, tried to buy the ability to lay hands on people and have them receive the Holy Spirit. Have you ever seen someone try to buy something that money can't buy? Or have you ever bargained with God; promising something to God if God will answer your prayer?
6. How does Acts 8 portray the variety of ways the Holy Spirit can influence people toward God? Can we create spaces and settings to enable the Spirit's work in the world?

Prayer:

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

- > Pray for healing for Cheri Fuchs and Ryan Carr.

Info for your group:

- > We are hosting our IHN friends again Nov 26-Dec 3. Visit zpc.org to sign up.
- > Volunteers are needed for Trunk or Treat at ZPC on Oct 29. Contact Kristin Lehr [kristinl@zpc.org].
- > Shepherd Community Center needs volunteers for their fall celebration on Oct 31. Visit zpc.org/current_opportunities for more information.

Leader's Notes:

The early church is now persecuted and scattered. We begin to see how the Christian faith grew quickly. Those who had been scattered reached out to tell others about Jesus. Philip, like Peter before him, is healing people. The early leaders even reach out to "outcasts" like the Samaritans and to Simon the Sorcerer. We can study how the early church grew and learn from how they dealt with trouble and conflict – and still were outward-focused. Let's do that as we study Acts 8 together.

[Question 1] We are trying to remind your groups about what we studied the week before and ask specifically if you were able to practice something from the previous week. While you or your group members will not always be able to do this, we hope these questions keep us thinking (and practicing) what we are learning weekly.

[Question 2] God uses persecution of the early church to spread his word. If not, many of these bold leaders may have stayed in Jerusalem. God uses bad for good. In Genesis 50:20, Joseph says that his brothers intended to harm him, and they did, but God used it for good. All of us, especially in the political climate today in America, can feel persecuted. We may feel looked down on or challenged for our faith, but we might use challenges and conflict to grow and for good as we continue to follow Jesus.

[Question 3] Think of who might be outcasts. It could be all kinds of groups. Be careful how you handle talking about certain groups. Who are the real outcasts to us? We are to treat others with respect and to care for all people. Talk about how we might care for them in creative ways. Perhaps we use ZPC's ministry partners like Str8up, Shepherd, Habitat or local missions.

[Question 4] We might pursue God to get something, or because we feel like we are supposed to – to earn something. Simon wanted more fame, attention and power – the power to give the Holy Spirit. He may have deep down wanted something good – more of God – but didn't know how to get it.

[Question 5] We may not be people who try to pay for something that money can't buy. But it's pretty common to bargain with God. Pray to God with passion – asking for God's will to be done. Pray that your will aligns with God's will. Ask God for the Holy Spirit to help you in all things.

[Question 6] God gives the Holy Spirit through the disciples so that Samaritans can have God's presence. God heals people through the Holy Spirit. God can even change someone like Simon if he submits himself to God. Create space by humbling yourself, asking God for help, and believing that God will work in you and others around you who desire God.