



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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## LESSON 8 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 8:1-40

### DAY ONE

1. What thought from the Reflection or last week's commentary (Lesson 7) was especially meaningful to you and why?

### Read Acts 8:1-3

2. In Chapter 7, we read about the death of Stephen. Today's passage opens with Saul's approval of the stoning of Stephen (verse 1). Share some information regarding Saul.

3a. According to the next part of verse 1, a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem the day that Stephen died. What did this cause to happen throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria?

b. The apostles themselves did not scatter. When they were previously arrested, who recommended that they be set free and how might this have affected their decision to stay (refer to Acts 5:34-40)?

4a. What could result from the scattering of these devout Christians throughout the countryside?

b. While many Christians scattered, what did some devout men do (verse 2)?

5. In your own words, explain what Saul did according to verse 3.

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6. CONNECTION: We read in this passage that Saul not only approved of the stoning of Stephen, the Church's first martyr, but that he also violently dragged Christians from their homes and imprisoned them. Saul's persecution of Christians was justified in his mind, and yet he later converted and bitterly regretted these actions. Have you ever acted in a manner that seemed right at the time but later had a change of heart and recognized that your reaction was too harsh? After prayerful reflection, how would you advise a "younger you" to handle the same situation?

Read 1 John 3:19-20 and write a prayer today, asking God to keep your heart open to His Word.

## **DAY TWO**

### **Read Acts 8:4-8**

7. Yesterday we saw that persecution caused many Christians to flee Jerusalem. What did those who had been scattered do (verse 4)?

8. Philip, one of the seven deacons appointed to serve the church (Acts 6:5), also left Jerusalem. Where did he go and what did he do according to verse 5?

9. According to verse 6, Philip received much attention. What phrase indicates this and what made the crowds notice him?

10a. Describe the signs that Philip performed, according to verse 7.

b. Verse 8 states the result of all this. What was it?

11. CONNECTION: Today we see that the church - born so recently in the Upper Room and grown so vigorously - has now, through a terrible persecution, been forced to spread out of Jerusalem into Judea

and Samaria. While this was a terrible calamity, it brought about a good result- the spread of the gospel! Has something you feared turned into a blessing in your life? For example, perhaps you miss a plane and bump into an old friend at the airport; you get sick and as a result have time to reflect on your blessings; you lose electrical power, and spend an evening talking with a loved one by candlelight. Recall something from the past month that you dreaded, but that turned out for good. Record some details.

Read and record [Romans 8:28](#) and begin your prayer today thanking God for making all things "right" in the end.

## **DAY THREE**

### **Read Acts 8:9-17**

12a. Today's passage continues with the events happening in Samaria. According to verse 9, who is introduced and, in your own words, what is he like?

b. According to verses 10 and 11, briefly summarize how the Samaritan people reacted to this magician.

13a. When the men and women heard Philip preach and teach, what two things did they do, according to verse 12?

b. Philip's proclaiming must have been powerful because it even touched the heart of Simon. What do we learn about Simon after his baptism (verse 13)?

14. The news went back to Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted the word of God. According to verse 14, what happened then?

15a. What did Peter and John do after they arrived in Samaria, according to verse 15?

b. The Samaritans had been baptized, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit (verse 16). According to verse 17, what did Peter and John do that Philip was unable to do?

**NOTE:** Here and in certain other passages, Luke makes a distinction between baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit, bestowed by the laying on of hands by the twelve or those designated by them. For more information, see CCC 1288.

16. CONNECTION: Today's passage compares Simon the Magician with Philip the Deacon. Simon claimed to be great, while Philip made no claims about himself, but brought the Good News of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to the people. God was able to use Philip to perform great wonders. Consider whether or not you are "usable" by God. What need do you see in the world that you wish could be fulfilled with God's help? Do you have a dream, large or small, that you wish that God could accomplish through you? If you are comfortable, tell your small group about your "dream."

Read and record Ephesians 2:10 and begin your prayer today asking that God use you for His glory.

## **DAY FOUR**

### **Read Acts 8:18-25**

17. As today's passage opens, Simon the Magician witnessed the giving of the Spirit through the laying on of hands by the apostles. Describe what he did and summarize what he said in verses 18 and 19.

18. How did Peter respond to Simon in verse 20?

19. According to verse 21, how did Peter continue his rebuke of Simon's desire to buy the power to perform signs and wonders?

20. In verse 22, what two commands does Peter give to Simon? (Include the details of these directives.)

21a. According to verse 23, what two things does Peter “see” about Simon?

b. Simon’s response is interesting. He is not angry, haughty, or defensive. What are his words, and how would you describe the attitude in which he responds (verse 24)?

22. This passage ends with the return of Peter and John to Jerusalem. Verse 25 tells us what they had done in Samaria and continued to do as they traveled toward Jerusalem. Record those things here.

23. CONNECTION: In today's lesson, we see that Simon the Magician wanted to bribe Peter, John and Philip in order to acquire powers. The word "simony" means the buying or selling of sacred things, and is forbidden by the Church. Although it is shocking to hear of Simon's attempted bribe and to hear of actual scandals in the Church, even more amazing is the faithfulness of those priests and bishops who, day in and day out, lead simple lives, ministering to rich and poor alike. Take time to give thanks for those who selflessly minister to their God's people. Mention one priest or bishop to your small group and why you especially appreciate him.

Read and record Psalm 85:11 and write a prayer today thanking God for those who have dedicated their lives to spreading the Good News.

## **DAY FIVE**

### **Read Acts 8:26-33**

24a. As we begin today's passage we continue to learn about the journey of Philip the deacon. Who came to Philip as he slept, and what was he instructed to do?

b. What two things does verse 26 tell us about the route Philip was to take?

25a. According to verse 27, describe what Philip did and the background of the person he encountered?

b. From the end of verse 27 and from verse 28, what was the Ethiopian doing?

26a. The Holy Spirit spoke to Philip (verse 29). With His prompting, what does Philip do and say next, according to verse 30?

b. According to verse 31, with what words and actions does the Ethiopian official respond?

27. It is remarkable that the Ethiopian man is reading from Isaiah at the time Philip meets him. Read verses 32 and 33. Who do you think Isaiah prophesied in those verses?

28. CONNECTION: The Ethiopian eunuch in today's passage was sitting in his chariot reading scripture aloud. He didn't have the key to unlock the words, but still he was drawn to them. Each of us is here today because we, too, have been drawn to the word of God. Open your bible and find a phrase or passage that is special to you to share with your small group. Record it here along with the circumstances by which you came to love it.

Reread your special scripture verse and let the thoughts from it inspire you as you begin your prayer today.

## **DAY SIX**

### **Read Acts 8:34-40**

29a. Today's passage continues Philip's conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch, who asked Philip about the subject of the passage from Isaiah. Summarize his question.

b. Philip used the quote from Isaiah as a starting point. What did he go on to proclaim to the eunuch?

30. According to verse 36, the Ethiopian had an idea. What was it, and what brought that idea to his mind?

**NOTE:** There is no verse 37. We are not given an explanation for this omission – it seems to have been left out from the earliest manuscripts.

31. The Ethiopian commanded the chariot to stop by the water. What happened next, according to verse 38?

32a. What amazing thing happened to Philip, according to verse 39?

b. What two things does that same verse tell us about the eunuch?

33. Suddenly Philip was no longer in the presence of the Ethiopian; he was in Azotus, the ancient Philistine capital. (In fact, Philip remained in Azotus for the next 20 years.) As he passed through that region, what did he do and how far did his travel extend?

34. Look up the various places mentioned in today's passage on your map and describe the path taken by Philip from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

35. CONNECTION: In this passage, an educated, wealthy and worldly official told Philip that he needed his help to understand the passage from Isaiah that he was reading. The Bible can be difficult to understand, but there are many resources available to help us. Among those resources, Catholics have the gifts of the Magisterium and Church tradition to help them understand the Bible. In each of our lives, we have experienced beautiful meditations, commentaries from biblical scholars, homilies from our priests, or even sacred music that help us to open our hearts to God's word. Do you remember an "Ah Ha" moment you have had in church, on retreat, or even in Cornerstone, that has helped to increase your understanding of a passage or book of the Bible? Share this with your small group.

Read and record 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and begin your prayer today thanking God for His Living Word!

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 8 (refer to pages 64–67 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 57-62 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture

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