



The Church Is Persecuted and the Gospel Spread

Acts 8:1–25



LESSON GOAL

Students will turn over the reign of their lives to King Jesus.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain how persecution led to the spread of the church.
- Distinguish between the Samaritans' response and Simon's response to Philip's message.
- Tell why God delayed the outpouring of the Spirit in the case of the Samaritans.
- Describe Simon's heart problem and the solution Peter offered.

KEY VERSE

“You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.” —Acts 8:21

APPLICATION

- Rejoice that God's kingdom spread.
- Love someone who has been your enemy and pray for an opportunity to share the Gospel with them.
- Examine your heart to see whether you have false motives for confessing submission to Christ.

NEXT WEEK

Philip Shares the Gospel with the Ethiopian
Acts 8:26–40

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

Perhaps Satan believed he had secured a great victory against the Son of Man when the angry mob stoned Stephen. But Stephen’s death was not a defeat for the Kingdom of God. Jesus, who has all authority under heaven, used Stephen’s death and the following persecution to spread the good news of Himself throughout Judea and Samaria. Acts 8:1–25 records the Kingdom’s advance into Samaria. While many Samaritans repented and entered God’s kingdom, one Samaritan named Simon faked obedience in order to advance his own kingdom. While the record of the Samaritans’ conversion and reception of the Spirit is primarily a testimony to the unstoppable advance of God’s Kingdom, Peter’s judgment of Simon’s bogus repentance is a warning to any who resent the coming of the King.

The Persecution of the Church (Acts 8:1–3)

Although the apostles had already suffered for preaching the name of Jesus (5:40), the murder of Stephen marked the beginning of widespread persecution of the church. One of those who persecuted the church was named Saul. Luke describes how Saul, a Pharisee who had consented to the death of Stephen (8:1), tried to destroy the church. Saul was so zealous for the church’s obliteration that he went house to house searching for believers. When he found them, whether they were men or women, he put them in prison (8:3). Later in Acts, Paul tells how before his conversion he had voted for saints be put to death, he had “punished them often in every synagogue,” and he had “persecuted them even to foreign cities” (26:11).

Before persecution broke out against the church, the church had remained centered in Jerusalem, but after the death of Stephen, the church was “scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” (8:1). Even though many believers fled Jerusalem for the surrounding areas, the apostles remained to care for those who remained (8:2). It is likely that the majority of the believers who left were among the Hellenist while those who remained were largely Hebrews. Little did persecutors like Saul realize that forcing the believers to flee Jerusalem would only lead to the name of Jesus being proclaimed elsewhere.

The Proclamation of Christ (Acts 8:4–13)

The Gospel spread rapidly when “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (8:4). One of those who proclaimed the Gospel after leaving Jerusalem was Philip (8:5). Philip was one of the seven men who had been appointed to oversee the distribution of food in Acts 6:5. Philip went to the north of Jerusalem to the city of Samaria, the ancient capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Following the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., the Assyrians forced the Israelites into exile and repopulated the land with Gentiles. The Samaritans were the descendants of Gentiles who intermarried with the remaining Israelites. Because of their mixed lineage, the Jews denigrated the Samaritans as half-breeds. The Samaritans' sacred writings were based on the first five books of the Old Testament. Like the Jews, the Samaritans waited for a messiah but unlike the Jews, they refused to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews and Samaritans had hated each other for centuries and each considered the other heretical.

Although most Jews hated the Samaritans, Philip followed his Lord's example (John 4:1–42) and preached the Gospel to them. Luke summarizes Philip's message succinctly: Philip "preached Christ to them" (Acts 8:5). Just as the apostles had done in Jerusalem, Philip preached the death, resurrection, and crucifixion of Christ and called on the Samaritans to repent. No doubt Philip took advantage of the Samaritans' expectation of a messiah and proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah whom they were waiting for (John 8:25–26).

Philip had a successful ministry among the Samaritans who "with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip" (Acts 8:6). The Samaritans rejoiced not only when they heard Philip's message but also when they saw the miraculous signs that Philip was doing (vv.6–8). God demonstrated the authenticity of Philip's message by allowing him to do miracles such as casting out demons and healing the lame and paralyzed (v.7). Between hearing Philip's preaching about the "kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" and seeing the miracles that Philip performed, the Samaritans believed and were baptized (v.12). Just as Jesus had promised, the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 1:8).

To demonstrate how powerful God's Gospel is, Luke described the Samaritans before their conversion. Before the Samaritans had obeyed Jesus, they heeded a man named Simon. Simon "practiced sorcery...and astonished the people of Samaria" (Acts 8:9). Sorcery was a mix of science and superstition, including astrology, divination and the occult (MSB, 1648). Because Simon performed impressive and mysterious deeds (whether through trickery or demonic enablement), the Samaritans listened to his claim that "he was someone great" (8:9). They were so deceived by Simon that they said "This man is the great power of God" (v.10). The Samaritans believed that Simon was somehow united with God and a manifestation of His power in bodily form. For a long time, the people "heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries" (v.12). Although the Samaritans had been deceived, the light of the Gospel dawned in their hearts when they heard about Jesus, the Man who really is God, and when they saw the miracles Philip performed.

The Samaritans were not the only ones convinced of Jesus' supremacy. Even Simon was convinced by Philip's message and miracles. Although Simon did not repent (8:21–22), he pretended to be a disciple, submitted to baptism and followed Philip (v.13). Once he had exalted himself as the "great power" but now Simon could not deny that Jesus was the greater power. He followed Philip around, continually amazed at the miracles Philip did (v.13). Simon would eventually reveal the jealousy in his heart, but for now, Luke uses him as dramatic proof that the most wicked blasphemers cannot deny the power of the exalted Christ.

The Prayer for the Samaritans (Acts 8:14–17)

Even though the Samaritans had believed the Gospel and had been baptized in demonstration of their obedience to Christ, the Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:16). Both in the early church and the church today, people

receive the Holy Spirit when they are first saved (1 Cor. 12:13). Although this is God's normal pattern, God delayed sending the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritans in order to emphasize that a new group of believers was about to be added into the church.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans "had received the word of God" (Acts 8:14), the apostles Peter and John went to Samaria. After the apostles prayed for the Samaritans (8:15) and laid their hands on them (8:17), the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. (Perhaps the reception of the Holy Spirit was followed by a miraculous display like speaking in tongues which allowed all present to know that the Samaritans had received the Spirit.) Because the Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles came and prayed, the apostles were certain that the Samaritans had been included in the church. The event would also reveal to the Samaritans that they were under the apostles' authority since they did not receive the Spirit until Peter and John prayed and laid their hands on them. The outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Samaritans was testimony to the fact that God's kingdom was spreading to the ends of the earth. Those who had previously hated each other were now unified in one body.

The Presumption of Simon (Acts 8:18–25)

Not all the Samaritans rejoiced that God's kingdom had advanced with such force. Even though Simon had professed belief in Christ and had been baptized, he resented the power that God had given the apostles over the Samaritans. Before he had been praised as the great power by the Samaritans who heeded him, but now the Samaritans were obeying Jesus and his representatives the apostles. Desperate to regain control of his own little kingdom, Simon foolishly offered Peter and John money for the ability to impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands (8:19). Simon thought that the apostles had power in the fingertips to give God to whom they chose. He did not understand that the apostles' laying on of hands was simply a symbolic gesture that the apostles approved of the Samaritan's salvation.

Peter's pronouncement against Simon is one of the strongest in Scripture. Peter told Simon that he was currently going to hell (along with his money) since he thought the "gift of God could be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). Because his heart was not "right in the sight of God", Simon had no real part with the church, even though he had mentally assented to the truth of Philip's claims and had been publicly baptized (8:21). Even though Peter revealed that Simon was going to hell, he still told Simon that he would be forgiven if he repented (8:22). But until Simon repented, he would remain "poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (8:23). Neither a profession of faith nor baptism could transfer Simon from Satan's kingdom to God's as long as he remained a slave to sin. The only antidote to his poisoned heart was repentance and faith. Unwilling to submit himself to the Gospel's requirements, Simon asked Peter to pray that he would escape judgment. Simon knew that Peter represented the true God but showed no evidence of wanting to submit himself to the Lordship of Christ.

Conclusion

Following their time in the ancient capital of Samaria, the apostles returned to Jerusalem. On their way home, the apostles preached in many of the villages of Samaria (8:25). God's kingdom continued to spread as more and more of the Samaritans responded in faith to the Gospel. Neither persecution, false prophets, or racial hatred could stop God's kingdom from advancing. Even though the victory of God's kingdom is certain, each person must examine their heart to see whether they have embraced King Jesus. Neither a vague belief in God's power, a

confession of faith, nor an act of baptism will rescue someone from their own wickedness. Claiming submission to Christ does not release one from being “bound by iniquity” (8:23). Like Simon, many have welcomed God’s kingdom with their mouths but have resented it in their hearts.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What were some characteristics of Stephen?

He was a man of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and faith.

Who did Stephen preach to?

Stephen preached to those in Greek-speaking synagogues.

Who did Stephen speak to?

Stephen spoke to the Sanhedrin.

What did Stephen tell the Sanhedrin?

Stephen told them of God’s plan for Israel and how the Jews were rejecting the true Messiah.

What did the Jews think of Stephen’s message?

They were very angry at Stephen. They gnashed their teeth in anger at him, covered their ears and cried out in a loud voice.

What did the Jews do to Stephen?

They picked up stones and hit Stephen with them to kill him.



Difficult Concepts

Persecution: The Christians were persecuted by Jewish people and by the Roman government. They were thrown in jail and sometimes even killed. The head of the Roman government was called Caesar, and he demanded that people call him “lord.” Because Christians would only call Jesus Christ “Lord,” the Roman government arrested and killed them as traitors. Explain the concept of laws in the United States. Just like it’s against the law to kill someone, being a Christian was against the law.

Magic: Simon used magic to make himself famous. He claimed to be the great power of God. His magic may have just been tricks, like when a man at the circus pulls a rabbit out of a hat. However, his magic may also have been an evil power.

Delayed Outpouring of the Spirit: The Samaritans were half-Jewish, but they hated the Jews. The Jews hated them, too. When the Gospel started to spread, Jews may have doubted that Samaritans could be Christians. However, the Holy Spirit

came on the Samaritans just like it did the Jews. Because the Holy Spirit came to the Samaritans in a special way, God showed that the Samaritans were Christians just like the Jews. Use the illustration of an adopted child getting the same last name as the rest of the family. Even though he came later, he gets the same name and everyone recognizes he belongs to the family.



Black and White Hearts

Materials: black and white clay

Directions: Give the students both black and white clay. Discuss with them how every person is born with a black heart. Help them to make a heart with the black clay. Talk about the bad attitudes and actions that go along with a black heart. Next have them create a white heart. Explain that the only people who can have a white heart are those who tell God that they were wrong and who trust in Him to pay for their sins. In today's lesson we will learn about a man named Simon who would not tell God that he was wrong. He had a black heart. We will also learn about a group of people who trusted God and told God that their sins were wrong. These people were given white hearts by God.



Traveling

Philip was traveling to Samaria. Once he arrived he shared the gospel with the people there. To illustrate to the students the idea of traveling to another place give them a suitcase and clothes. Ask the students what they would take on a trip. Explain that because of the persecution that was happening many of the believers had to pack their things and leave quickly to escape the persecution.



Charades

Have the children act like something they are not. Prepare several ideas ahead of time. Have a student act like an animal such as a cat purring and meowing, or like an object, such as a tree or a train. Go on to explain that in today's lesson Simon acts like something he was not. He was pretending.



False Motives

Discuss with your students what false motives are. Ask them if they are ever nice to their brothers or sisters just so they won't tell their parents on them for doing something bad. Ask if they are ever kind at school just so they can get a toy from the person they're being nice to. Instead of being kind or nice because that's the right thing to do, explain they are being kind or nice with false motives. To demonstrate this even further, act out a scene where a student shows false motives. Have the student say nice things to a teacher. When the teacher turns around, have the student whisper to the class that he hopes the teacher will give him an extra snack for being nice. Or, act out being helpful around the house right at bedtime so the parents will let the child stay up late.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Passage Outline

The Persecution of the Church (Acts 8:1–3)

The Proclamation of Christ (Acts 8:4–13)

The Prayer for the Samaritans (Acts 8:14–17)

The Presumption of Simon (Acts 8:18–25)

Reading of the Text

Read Acts 8:1–25.

Introduction

Have you ever ridden a horse and tried to steer it in the direction you want it to go? For those mules that are stubborn this can be a real challenge. Even though you are the one to be in control, they resist your instruction at every turn. No matter how hard you pull on the reins, they can be totally unwilling to submit to your authority. Many people respond just as stubbornly to the Gospel. Even though they profess to be followers of Christ, they never seem to want to submit their lives to His authority. As reigning King, Jesus deserves such submission. To those who fail to submit there are grave consequences. Such stubbornness is seen in today’s lesson through a Samaritan named Simon. To look at one’s failure to submit to Christ, let us now look into Acts 8:1–25.



Lead-off Questions

LOQ: At the beginning of today’s lesson, who do we see persecuting the church?

Answer: One of those who persecuted the church was named Saul. We learned in last week’s lesson that Saul was the man who had held the coats of those who were stoning Stephen. Saul hated Christ, and all those who followed Him. In fact, he hated the church so much that he even went from house to house searching for believers. When he found them he had them thrown in prison.

LOQ: How did this persecution lead to the spread of the gospel?

Answer: Before persecution broke out against the church, the church had remained centered in Jerusalem. Yet because of persecution, Luke writes that many had fled Jerusalem and traveled to other surrounding areas in an effort to avoid the persecution. Little did persecutors like Saul realize that forcing believers to flee Jerusalem would only lead to the name of Jesus being

proclaimed elsewhere. The Gospel began to spread rapidly when “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (8:4).

LOQ: Of those who fled Jerusalem who do we see preaching the gospel in today’s lesson?

Answer: One of those who proclaimed the Gospel after leaving Jerusalem was Philip. Like Stephen, Philip was one of the seven men who had been chosen to oversee the care for the widows in last’s week’s lesson. Philip went to the north of Jerusalem to the city of Samaria.

LOQ: What people group do we see Philip preaching to in Samaria?

Answer: That Philip escaped persecution by fleeing to Samaria is interesting. Those living there would have been Samaritans. Like the Jews, the Samaritans had waited for a messiah for many years. Yet the Jews and Samaritans had hated each other for centuries and each considered the other to be disgusting and vile before God. Although most Jews hated the Samaritans, Philip followed his Lord’s example and preached the Gospel to them. Just as the apostles had done in Jerusalem, Philip preached the death, resurrection, and crucifixion of Christ and called the Samaritans to repent. In preaching that Jesus was the Messiah, Philip understood that the Samaritans were in need of salvation also.

LOQ: How do the Samaritans respond to the gospel?

Answer: The Samaritans rejoiced not only when they heard Philip’s message but also when they saw the miraculous signs that Philip was doing. God had given Philip the power to do miracles such as casting out demons and healing the lame and paralyzed (8:7). Between hearing Philip’s preaching about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and seeing the miracles that Philip performed, the Samaritans believed and were baptized. Just as Jesus had promised, the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 1:8).

LOQ: Who had the Samaritans followed before following Christ?

Answer: Before the Samaritans had obeyed Jesus, they obeyed a man named Simon. Simon “practiced sorcery...and astonished the people of Samaria (8:9). Because Simon performed impressive and mysterious deeds, the Samaritans listened to his claim that “he was someone great” (8:9). They were so deceived by Simon that they thought he was somehow connected to God. This however did not stop the Gospel from doing a work in their hearts. Even though the Samaritans had been deceived, they could not ignore the truth that Jesus, the Messiah, really was God in the form of a Man. Simon was just a pretender.

LOQ: How does Simon respond to Philip's message?

Answer: Even Simon was convinced by Philip’s message and miracles. Although Simon did not repent (8:21–22), he pretended to be a disciple by partaking in baptism and following Philip. Once he had exalted himself as the great power, but now Simon could not deny that Jesus was the greater power. He followed Philip around, continually amazed at the miracles Philip did.

LOQ: What does God delay in giving the Samaritans who had submitted to Christ and repented of their sin?

Answer: Even though the Samaritans had believed the Gospel and been baptized in demonstration of their obedience to Christ, the Samaritans had not yet

received the Holy Spirit. In most cases, new believers generally receive the Holy Spirit at the moment they are saved (1 Cor 12:13). Yet God delayed sending the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritans in order to emphasize that a new group of believers was about to be added into the church.

LOQ: Why do the apostles leave Jerusalem to visit the new believers there in Samaria?

Answer: The apostles left Jerusalem so that they could pray for those Samaritans who were now believers. After the apostles prayed for the Samaritans and laid their hands on them, the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. Because the Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles came and prayed, the apostles were certain that the Samaritans had been included in the church. Those who had previously hated each other were now unified in one body. This outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Samaritans was evidence to the fact that God's kingdom was spreading to the ends of the earth.

LOQ: How does Simon react to the pouring out of the Spirit there in Samaria?

Answer: Even though Simon had professed belief in Christ and had been baptized, he resented the power that God had given the apostles over the Samaritans. In his desire to regain control and power over the Samaritans, Simon foolishly offered the apostles money for ability to give out the Spirit through the laying on of hands. Simon thought that the apostles had the power of God in the tips of their fingers. He did not understand that the laying on of hands was merely to symbolize that the apostles were confident in the Samaritans salvation.

LOQ: How does Peter rebuke the unrepentant Simon?

Answer: Peter rebukes Simon by telling him that he was currently going to hell because he thought the "gift of God could be purchase with money" (8:20). Because his heart was not "right in the sight of God," Simon had no real part with the church. Despite having professed to believe and partaken in baptism, Simon had never genuinely submitted to Christ. Even though Peter revealed that Simon was going to hell, he still told Simon that he would be forgiven if he repented (8:22).

LOQ: How does Peter describe the unrepentant Simon?

Answer: Peter stated that until he repented, Simon would continue to be "poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (8:23). Simon's actions had proven that he was still a slave to sin. He had only the desire to please and obey himself, not Christ. As long as he remained a slave to sin, neither a profession of faith nor baptism could transfer Simon from Satan's kingdom to God's. According to the Gospel, the only solution to Simon's fallen condition was genuine faith and repentance.

LOQ: How does Simon respond to Peter's invitation of freedom from sin?

Answer: At the end of today's lesson, we see that Simon asks Peter to pray that he would escape judgment. Simon knew that Peter represented the true God but showed no evidence of wanting to submit himself to the Lordship of Christ. Simon had remained unwilling to heed the Gospel's requirements: to have faith in Jesus Christ and repent of one's sin.

Summary

The death of God's servant Stephen was not going to stop God from advancing His kingdom. Jesus, who has all authority under heaven, used Stephen's death and the following persecution to spread the good news of Himself throughout other parts of the world as He promised. One example of this was a man by the name of Philip. Philip was a follower of Christ who had fled Jerusalem to Samaria in order to escape persecution. During his stay there in Samaria, Philip faithfully proclaimed the gospel. While many Samaritans responded by believing in Christ and repenting of their sin, one Samaritan named Simon faked obedience in order to advance his own kingdom. Even though he believed in Jesus, Simon remained unwilling to repent of his sin and submit to Christ. He merely pretended to be a follower of Christ so that he would receive the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter recognized the sinful and unrepentant state of Simon's heart. Peter's rebuke of Simon's bogus repentance is a warning to any who resist submitting to the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Application

In today's lesson persecution was unable to stop God's kingdom from advancing. Even though the victory of God's kingdom is certain, each person must examine their own heart to see whether they have truly submitted the reign of King Jesus. Neither a vague belief in God's power, a confession of faith, nor an act of baptism will rescue someone from their own wickedness. Claiming submission to Christ does not release one from being "bound by iniquity" (8:23). Like Simon, many have welcomed God's kingdom with their mouths but have rejected Him in their hearts. May each of us examine our actions to see if we have demonstrated true repentance and faith in Christ.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Act It Out

Act out a scene where two students or teachers act out false motives. One student has acts in a particular way with another student with false motives such as popularity or for what the student has.



Simony

Ask the students if they know what the word "simony" means. Give a prize to the student who can guess correctly. Have the students look up this word in the dictionary. In today's lesson we will learn where this word came from.



Freeze Frame

First, dramatize Saul's persecution of the church. This may be done on video to show at the beginning of teaching time; otherwise, dramatize it simply with two characters, one Saul and another believer being "persecuted." The first three verses of the chapter could be read as narration. Then, have the scene "freeze" either by pausing the video or having the characters stand as still as statues. Finally, drama-



tize the remainder of the lesson with the frozen scene in the background, and explain that while persecution was happening, the gospel was spread and more people became Christians.

Simon's Heart

Blow out the inside of an egg. The hole can be concealed with wax or a small amount of tape. Show the class a regular egg and the one that has been blown out. Ask if they see any differences. First, break open the regular egg and show them the yolk. Then, crack the hollow egg and show them that it is empty. Discuss how Simon looked the same on the outside, but was missing something inside.



The Spread of the Gospel, Version One

Items needed: glass bowl full of water, a small, shallow cup or dish that floats, blue food coloring, and several small rocks

Fill small container with blue food coloring and float it in the bowl of water. While the container is floating in the water share with the students how the gospel had mostly been contained within the city of Jerusalem. As you start to talk about the persecution that was inflicted upon the church, begin to throw the small rocks into the water. The water should begin to rock violently enough so that the blue food coloring inside the container spills into the water. The students will be able to visibly see how the food coloring makes its way throughout the water. Such a visual illustration will demonstrate how the persecution against the church managed to spread forth the gospel.



The Spread of the Gospel, Version Two

Materials: a solid block of cheese and a cheese slicer

Directions: The beginning of today's lesson begins with the church being persecuted by Saul. Before this time, the gospel had for the most part been contained inside of Jerusalem. This would be represented by the solid block of cheese in front of the class. The students will be able to observe how the cheese is contained in one physical location (i.e., in the form of a block of cheese). To represent the persecution that took place upon the church, begin slicing the block of cheese. The students will be able to observe how the cheese is now distributed into tiny slices, able to be dispensed to each of those present in the class. This illustrates to the students how the persecution of the church attributed to the spread of the gospel. That believers fled Jerusalem to avoid persecution allowed for them to share the gospel with people in other surrounding countries.

Praise and Worship

Make Me a Servant

Change My Heart, O God

White As Snow

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.

Share the Good News

Materials: paper or Styrofoam plate, knife or scissors and verse.

Procedure: To encourage the students to share the good news with others create a good news Frisbee by cutting out the center of a plate leaving only the outer rim in tact. You may want to try different diameters for the most effective Frisbee. Allow the students do decorate their Frisbee with the gospel message.

What’s in the Heart

Materials: copies of “What’s in the Heart” craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons, or other decorations

Directions: Give each child a copy of the craft pages. Have him or her cut out the the rectangle on the first page and then fold the sides along the dotted lines so they cover the hearts. This should make two doors that can open and reveal the hearts inside. Next, have them cut out the three hearts from the second page and then glue the right side of each heart to the right door in the correct order. When the students open the doors they will be able to read (or have someone else read to them) what kind of heart a true believer has, what kind of heart Simon the sorcerer had, and then discuss what kind of heart they have.

Salvation for Sale?

Ask the students what Simon the sorcerer did and why it was wrong. Ask them if salvation can be bought today? Are there people today that claim that they have the power of the Holy Spirit and that can do miracles? What do they usually want to do?

Links Craft

Create a chain of paper illustrating reasons for false confessions of faith. Write on four pieces of paper ideas such as please parents, jealousy, fear of others, or to make me look good. You could also ask the students to come up with one idea of their own. Prepare a final piece of paper with the key verse on it. Link the papers together in a chain.

“The Church Is Persecuted and the Gospel Continues to Spread”

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. It is located at the back of this lesson.

Small Group Activity: “Responding to the Gospel”

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. He or she can complete the page individually, in a small group, or at home.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. He or

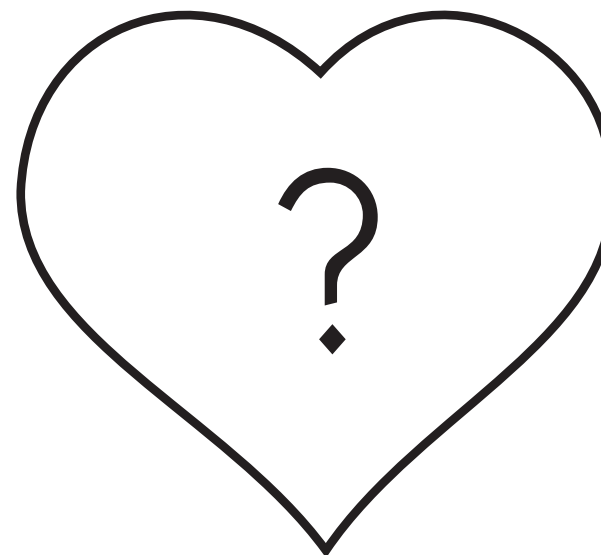
she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.

MEMORY VERSE

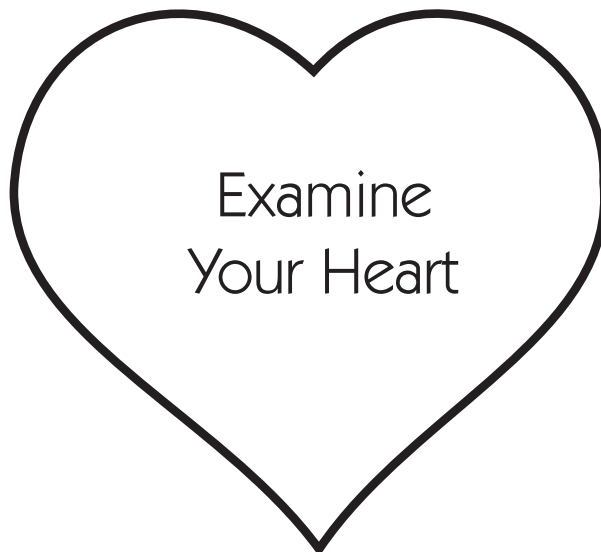
“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

—Acts 8:4

What's in the Heart



What's in the Heart



The Church

is persecuted and the
Gospel *spreads*



Acts 8:1–25

Name _____

1. The church was scattered because of _____ (8:1).
2. Those who were scattered continued to preach _____ (8:4).
3. True or False: The people of Samaria rejected Philip and his message. _____
4. Which apostles were sent to Samaria? _____
 - a. Judas and Matthew
 - b. Peter and John
 - c. Paul and James
 - d. Anthony and Nathan
5. What did the Samaritan believers receive when the apostles laid their hands on them?

6. True or False: Simon wanted to buy the power to give people the Holy Spirit. _____
7. Peter said to Simon “your _____ is not _____ in the _____
of God (8:21b).

The Gospel Spreads

“You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.” — Acts 8:21

Have you ever knocked over your milk or juice while eating? Did you notice how quickly the liquid spread across the table and down onto the floor? In a similar way, when the early Christians were persecuted, they quickly spread the gospel across the regions of Judea and Samaria, but unlike the milk or juice you spilt that was stopped from spreading by paper towels, nothing could stop the gospel from spreading and reaching sinners.

That was the case when Saul tried to stop the gospel by entering into every house and dragging believers off to prison (Acts 8:3). He thought the results of his actions would stop the gospel, but, like a fire being fanned, his actions actually increased the spread of the gospel.

The gospel spread when the Christians were scattered from

JEUSERMAL _____, throughout the regions

of **DUJEA** _____ and **RISAMAMA**

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When the gospel spread, many people believed and were saved, but others, like Simon the sorcerer, did not believe from the heart. Philip told Simon that he would be saved if he repented and called upon the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul says to examine your heart to see if you are in the faith. After thinking about your salvation, finish the sentence below:

The only way to have my sins forgiven is to:

What happened when the Gospel spread?

What did Simon the sorcerer do wrong?

Praise God for giving us the chance to hear His good news of the Gospel!

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“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.” —Acts 8:5–6



"Then [Peter and John] laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

—Acts 8:17

