

LIFE GROUP SERMON SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Acts Series

These questions are for the **February 9, 2020** sermon, "From Gathered to Scattered." Please read the sermon passage (Acts 8:1-25) together out loud.

Sermon Outline

AS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ADVANCES, NOTE . . .

1. The trials God that permits (8:1-3)
 - a. God graciously allows trials which serve to spread the gospel.
 - b. The trials can range in severity but serve one purpose.
 - i. Saul "ravaged" (attacked like a dog) believers.
 - ii. Saul also listened to Stephen's message and watched him suffer faithfully.
2. The transitions that God creates (8:4-8)
 - a. Persecution forced Philip and others to bring the gospel to a new place: Samaria.
 - b. Remember that Jesus had previously been there, priming the pump (John 4)
 - c. Samaritans were "half-breeds" who had developed their own temple systems based only upon the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).
 - d. Philip proclaimed Jesus (the one who had been there) and the Samaritans received him!
3. The transformations that God tests (8:9-25)
 - a. Simon the sorcerer seemed to receive Jesus; but he wanted to "buy" Holy Spirit power.
 - b. Be very careful: professions of faith do not always prove possession of faith in Jesus.
 - c. Peter rebukes Simon, but Simon's faith never seems to prove to be authentic.
 - i. Watch out for spirituality without Scriptural and Spirit authenticity.
 - ii. Our world is full of Christian-looking celebrity. Don't be impressed!
 - iii. God is looking for humble, Christ-honoring servants.

Life Group Discussion Questions

1. Based on #1, above: What felt bad for Christ-followers (rejection, persecution, imprisonment and executions) served a greater purpose in advancing God's kingdom. Namely, it caused the people carrying hope to be scattered. Are you facing a painful trial that may be serving a kingdom purpose? Can you still relate to God as "gracious" in the midst of your persecution?
2. Based on #2, above: Persecution and trials lead to transitions. People move, we meet new people (nursing home personnel, doctors, new neighbors, etc.) and yet we are called to the main thing: keep proclaiming Christ even as it is costing you your life. What transitions are you facing? Are you focused on the transition? Or remaining faithful to Christ in the midst of it?
3. Based on #2, above: In Acts 6 we saw the Hebrew-speaking Jews and Greek-speaking Jews put away cultural differences to be united in Christ. Here, we see Samaritans and Jews putting away cultural and racial differences to be united in Christ. How can we improve at putting away language and racial differences to pursue unity in Christ? How are you seeking growth in this?
4. Based on #3, above: We get excited when we here that Justin Bieber or Kanye West has made a profession of faith in Jesus. Sometimes God works through influential voices. But we should be very careful to make certain that those who profess Christ actually possess authentic faith in Christ. Discuss: your neighbor will be impacted more by your authenticity than Kanye West's words. God is not seeking celebrity Christians. (And pray for Kanye!)