

## **ACTS: Advance – “A False Faith” (Acts 8:9-25)**

For the week of January 31, 2016

### **Testimony**

Have a volunteer share their testimony (5-10 minutes) if there are still members who have not had an opportunity to share.

### **Tell the Story**

Summarize or tell the story of Acts 8:9-25. Then read the passage. As a group discuss any missing details from the telling of the story. Finally, rebuild the story as a group.

### **Conned by the Power of Deception (Acts 8:9-13)**

Many people in the first century were influenced by enchanters and magicians. These so-called miracle workers were empowered by the enemy, Satan, and performed acts of exorcisms and healings (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9). They used trickery and magic to deceive their audiences. Most acts were performed for financial gain.

1. Before Philip the evangelist came to town, Simon seemingly enjoyed unrivaled attention and esteem.
  - a. Who was it that proclaimed Simon to be “great” (verse 9)?
  - b. Were the people convinced (verse 10)?
  - c. What seemed to convince them (verse 11)?

2. Are there modern-day “sorcerers” today? Where are they found and how do they deceive?

3. Some Christians are still looking for “quick fixes” and are naïve when it comes to the power of God. How can you discern when someone is functioning from authentic spiritual power that originates only through Jesus Christ and when they are not? How would you counsel someone who follows a “Simon?”

### **Converted by the Power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17)**

The Gospel was now moving beyond the bounds of Judaism and the Lord sovereignly waited to give any manifestation of the full power of the Holy Spirit until some of the apostles could be present (Philip was not an apostle). There would also be no question at all that the Samaritans had received the new covenant empowering of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the Jewish Christians. Many Jews despised the Samaritans and regarded them as ceremonially unclean. Philip’s preaching and the laying of hands by the apostles reflected the way the Gospel penetrated social and racial barriers. The event clearly showed that the grace of God in Christ Jesus is freely available to all.

1. Read Ephesians 1:13. When the Holy Spirit indwells believers, He brings about the changes that come with salvation. Describe those initial changes. As a believer continues his walk with the Lord and matures spiritually, how does the Holy Spirit work in their life?
  2. How does the Holy Spirit help us in our day-to-day lives? What are ways that we can block the Holy Spirit from being active and productive in our lives? When this has occurred in your life, how did you combat it?
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3. Should Christians profit from the work of the Kingdom? How do we know when we are using the Gospel for personal gain?
  4. Discuss the following statement, specifically the role of Christian leadership:

Religious charlatans have been around since ancient times and are present today. Many people fall prey to an assortment of scams. Christians are no exception. Some are victimized by charismatic individuals who pervert the Gospel for profit. True Christian leadership draws others by the power of the Holy Spirit, not false pretense. They are messengers of God who exalt the person of Jesus Christ.

### **Corrected by the Power of Forgiveness (Acts 8:18-25)**

Our society values materialism and believes that just about anything is available for a "price." Simon tried to barter God's spiritual gifts in hope of personal gain. He thought money had the power to buy anything he wanted. When he offered Peter and John money in exchange for the gift of the Holy Spirit, it provoked Peter's severe rebuke.

1. Reread verse 13 and then verses 20-21. Simon did not have saving faith (verse 13). Peter's strong rebuke (verses 20-21) confirms this. What is needed to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and receive the Holy Spirit? Read the following passages and then discuss.

- Romans 3:23
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 10:9
- Romans 5:1

### **Pray and Final Thought**

Often we are missing something in our spiritual life. It may be a sense of dryness or emptiness. This may be due to the absence of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives. Whether you are a new Christian or someone who is mature in the faith, you are always in need of spiritual renewal. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill and empower you and for you to minister to others.