



– Week 4 –
Pursuit Beyond Borders
(Acts 8:1-25)

Follows the Gospel into Samaria, showing God's pursuit of the marginalized and those with distorted faith.

Day 22: Scattered for Harvest (Acts 8:1-4)

Principle: Persecution becomes the vehicle for God's pursuit.

And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

— Acts 8:1-4 (NIV)

The Wind of the Spirit

To the early believers, the “great persecution” following Stephen’s death must have felt like the end. Families were torn apart, homes were abandoned, and the safety of the Jerusalem community was shattered. From a human perspective, it was a disaster.

But from God’s perspective, it was a deployment.

God’s passionate pursuit of people is not hindered by tragedy; it often uses tragedy as a vehicle. The Greek word for “scattered” (*diaspeirō*) is the same word used for sowing seed. God wasn’t just letting His people be chased away; He was planting them in new soil. He was pursuing the people of Judea and Samaria by sending His “living oracles” directly to their doorsteps on the feet of those fleeing for their lives.

The believers could have gone into hiding. They could have been silenced by fear or consumed by bitterness over their lost comfort. Instead, they “preached the word wherever they went.”

God’s pursuit is so relentless that He turns our “scatters” into “harvests.” Whether it’s a job loss, a forced move, or a season of unexpected change, God is often moving us into position to reach someone who wouldn’t have heard His voice otherwise. He uses our displacement to bring about someone else’s deliverance.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told them they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. For years, they stayed in Jerusalem. It took a trial to get them to the territories they had overlooked.

God is passionate about every person. If we get too comfortable in our “Jerusalems,” He may allow the winds of life to blow us toward a “Samaria.” He loves the people in the places we’ve avoided too much to let us stay put.

Reflection: Are you in a season of transition that feels like a setback? Ask God, “**Who am I near now that I wasn’t near before?**” You don’t need a church building to participate in God’s pursuit. Like the early church, how can you share words of life in the ordinary places you’ve been sent?

Prayer: Lord, thank You that nothing—not even persecution or pain—can stop Your pursuit of people. When my life feels scattered, help me to see it as a sowing. Use my presence in this new place to bring Your light to someone in the dark. Amen.

Day 23: Joy in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8)

Principle: God breaks cultural barriers to bring joy.

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

— Acts 8:5-8 (NIV)

Breaking the Unreachable Barrier

If you told a first-century Jew that God was pursuing the Samaritans, they might have laughed. The animosity between Jews and Samaritans was centuries deep—a thick wall of racial, cultural, and religious prejudice. To many, Samaria was a "flyover" country, a place of spiritual compromise.

But God's passionate pursuit doesn't recognize our "no-go" zones. He didn't just send Philip to Samaria; He sent him there with power. God was essentially saying, *"The people you've written off are the very ones I am writing into My story."*

Samaria was a place of spiritual darkness and great distress. Yet, when Philip arrived, the atmosphere shifted. Paralyzed people walked, and evil spirits fled. But the greatest miracle wasn't the physical healing—it was the great joy that flooded the city.

This is the hallmark of God's pursuit: He doesn't just come to fix us; He comes to bring us back to life. When the Gospel breaks into a place that has felt forgotten or rejected, the result isn't just relief; it's a celebration. God's pursuit of you is intended to end in your joy.

Philip wasn't an Apostle; he was a deacon—a table-server. Yet, God used him to ignite a revival. This reminds us that God's pursuit of people isn't limited to "professionals." He uses anyone willing to cross a street, a cubicle or a cultural divide.

Who are the "Samaritans" in your world? The people who seem too different, too difficult or too far gone? God is already pursuing them; He might just be waiting for you to "go down" and speak the name of Jesus.

Reflection: Who have you mentally labeled as "unlikely to believe"? Pray for them today, acknowledging that God's pursuit reaches further than your prejudice. Does your faith still spark great joy, or has it become a list of rules? Remember that the Gospel is *Good News* meant to be celebrated.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for breaking through the barriers to find me. Give me Philip's heart to go where I'm uncomfortable so that others might find Your joy. Use my life to bring light to the "Samarias" around me. Amen.

Day 24: Power vs. Presence (Acts 8:9-11)

Principle: God pursues those mesmerized by false power.

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.

— Acts 8:9-11 (NIV)

The Lure of the Amazing

Before Philip arrived with the Gospel, Samaria was captivated by a man named Simon. He was a master of spectacle, using sorcery to keep the crowds amazed. The people were so mesmerized by his tricks that they mistook human magic for divine majesty.

We often find ourselves in the same position. We are easily dazzled by "great powers"—wealth, celebrity, political influence, or even our own cleverness. We follow what amazes us, often settling for a cheap imitation of power because we haven't yet experienced the true presence of God.

Simon's power was built on a lie: he "boasted that he was someone great." Human power always centers on the self. It seeks to control, to impress, and to keep people "following" for the wrong reasons.

But God's passionate pursuit is different. He doesn't come to perform for us; He comes to transform us. While Simon used tricks to pull people *to himself*, God uses His Spirit to pull people *to His heart*. Simon's power led to temporary amazement; God's presence leads to eternal joy.

The most beautiful part of this story is that God didn't abandon the Samaritans to their deception. He saw a city "mesmerized" by a false god and sent Philip to offer them the Truth.

God's pursuit is so passionate that He is willing to compete with our idols. He doesn't just wait for us to get bored with our "Simons"; He breaks into our lives with a power that is actually "Great"—the power of a Savior who died to set us free from the need to be "amazed" by anything less than Him.

Reflection: Is there a person, a pursuit or a possession that currently has your "full attention"? Ask yourself if it is a source of true life or just a "sorcery" of the world. Reflect on the difference between power that seeks to *impress* and the power of God that seeks to *redeem*.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for being so easily distracted by the 'greatness' of this world. Thank You for pursuing me even when I am looking the wrong way. Help me to see through the illusions and find my rest in Your true presence. Amen.

Day 25: Belief and Baptism (Acts 8:12-13)

Principle: Simple faith is the entry point for God's pursuit.

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.
— Acts 8:12-13 (NIV)

The Simplicity of the Entry Point

After years of being mesmerized by Simon's magic, the Samaritans encountered something entirely different: The Good News. Philip didn't offer a new set of tricks; he offered Jesus. The transition was immediate. "When they believed... they were baptized."

God's passionate pursuit doesn't require a spiritual resume or a mountain of theological knowledge. The entry point is a simple, heart-level "Yes" to the name of Jesus. He chases us down not so we can earn His love, but so we can simply receive it.

Baptism was the outward sign of an inward surrender. By stepping into the water, these men and women were saying, "The old 'Egypt' in my heart is dead. I no longer belong to Simon's magic or my own past; I belong to the Kingdom of God."

God is so passionate about us that He gives us tangible ways to mark our belonging. Baptism is His way of letting the world know: *"This one is Mine."* It is the official "homecoming" for those who have been wandering.

Perhaps the most shocking part of this passage is that "Simon himself believed." The man who had set himself up as a god was pursued by the True God. Even those who have profited from deception or lived in deep pride are not outside the reach of the Gospel.

God's pursuit is so relentless that He is willing to save the very person who was leading others astray. He doesn't just want the "victims" of false power; He wants the "power-players" too.

Reflection: Do you ever feel like you need to "do more" to be worthy of God's pursuit? Remember that the Samaritans simply "believed and were baptized." Is there a "simple step" of obedience God is calling you to take today—perhaps baptism, a conversation, or a moment of surrender?

Prayer: Lord, thank You that Your Kingdom is open to everyone—even me. Thank You for pursuing me through the noise of the world. I believe in Your name and I choose to follow You today. Amen.

Day 26: The Delay of the Spirit (Acts 8:14–17)

Principle: God orchestrates unity in His family.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

— Acts 8:14-17 (NIV)

The Mystery of the Wait

In this passage, we encounter a strange “glitch” in the usual order of things. The Samaritans had believed and been baptized, yet the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon them. Why the delay? Was God’s pursuit lagging?

Quite the opposite. This delay was a divine orchestration. For centuries, Jews and Samaritans had been divided by a deep, jagged chasm of hatred. If the Samaritans had started their own “Christianity” separate from the Jerusalem church, the old walls would have simply been rebuilt with new religious labels. God delayed the Spirit so that the leaders from Jerusalem—Peter and John—would have to come, lay hands on their former enemies and welcome them as family.

God’s passionate pursuit is not just about individuals; it is about a Body. He doesn’t just want a collection of saved souls; He wants a unified family. He was pursuing the unity of the Church as much as the salvation of the Samaritans.

By making the Apostles witness the Spirit falling on “those people,” God forced the Jewish believers to realize that His grace has no favorites. The pursuit of God is so wide that it forces us to widen our own hearts. You cannot truly embrace the Father while refusing to embrace His other children.

Imagine the scene: Peter and John—who once asked Jesus if they should “call down fire” to destroy a Samaritan village (Luke 9:54)—are now laying their hands on Samaritan heads in prayer.

This is the transformative power of God’s pursuit. It doesn’t just save us *from* our sins; it saves us *into* a community. God’s pursuit of you might involve a “delay” or a difficult season specifically to bring you into a deeper connection with other believers you might otherwise avoid.

Reflection: The “Samaritans” in Your Life: Is there a person or group you find it hard to “lay hands on” in prayer? Ask God to show you how His pursuit of them is just as passionate as His pursuit of you. Do you try to live your faith in isolation? Remember that God often pours out His Spirit through the “laying on of hands”—through the connection and unity of the Church.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being a God of order and a God of peace. Forgive me for any walls I've built in my heart against others. Help me to see Your Spirit at work in people who are different from me. Knit us together in Your love. Amen.

Day 27: The Deception of Simon (Acts 8:18-21)

Principle: God's pursuit is a gift, not a transaction.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.

— Acts 8:18-21 (NIV)

The Transactional Trap

Simon had spent his life in the world of sorcery, where everything had a price. In his old life, power was bought, sold, and manipulated. When he saw the genuine power of the Holy Spirit, his first instinct was to pull out his wallet. He wanted to own the "gift of God" rather than be transformed by it.

We often fall into this same transactional trap. We try to buy God's favor with our good behavior, our church attendance, or our charitable giving. We treat God like a vending machine: if we put in enough goodness, we expect His power or protection to come out. But God's passionate pursuit is not a business deal; it is a rescue mission.

Peter's rebuke is stinging because the Holy Spirit is a gift (*dōrean*). You cannot buy a gift; you can only receive it. To try and pay for God's grace is to insult the Giver. It implies that what Jesus did on the cross wasn't enough and that we need to add our own money or merit to the pile.

God's pursuit is so passionate that He paid the price Himself. He doesn't want your currency; He wants your consecration. He isn't looking for a business partner; He is looking for a child who recognizes they have nothing to offer but an open heart.

Peter points out the root of the problem: Simon's heart is not right. He was pursuing the *benefits* of God without submitting to the *Lordship* of God. He wanted the influence of the Spirit while keeping the ego of the Sorcerer.

God's pursuit is relentless because He wants to get past our external religious performances and reach our actual hearts. He wants to move us from a *contract* mindset to a *covenant* relationship.

Reflection: Do you find yourself trying to bargain with God? ("Lord, if I do this, will You do that?") Practice resting in the fact that His love is already fully given. Today, spend a few minutes thanking God for the Holy Spirit as a free gift. Remind yourself that you don't have to earn His attention.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for the times I try to buy Your favor with my actions. Thank You that Your pursuit of me is a gift I could never afford. Cleanse my heart of any transactional thinking and help me to simply receive Your love. Amen.

Day 28: A Call to Repentance (Acts 8:22-25)

Principle: God pursues our hearts, not just our actions.

“Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.” After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

— Acts 8:22-25 (NIV)

The Pursuit of the Heart

God does not want your perfect performance; He wants your surrendered heart.

In Acts 8, a man named Simon witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit and tried to buy it with money. Peter’s response to him reveals a profound truth about how God relates to us:

“Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

— Acts 8:22-23

Simon’s mistake was thinking God cares about outward transactions. He saw the external signs and wanted the power, but his internal motivations were completely corrupt.

God is a passionate pursuer, but He never stops at the surface. He looks past our religious activities, our good behavior, and our financial contributions straight into our hidden motives. You can do the right things for the wrong reasons. God desires intimacy, not just compliance. When God exposes bitterness or sin in our hearts, it feels uncomfortable. However, this exposure is an act of mercy. Repentance is not a punishment. It is a pathway back to freedom and connection with a God who refuses to leave you captive to sin.

When Peter confronted Simon, it was an urgent call to snap out of deception. God pursues us passionately, which means He cares too much to let us fake our way through faith. He wants to break the chains of bitterness and pride that hold our hearts captive.

Reflection: Look at your recent spiritual habits or good deeds. Ask yourself if you are doing them to look good to others or to truly connect with God. Name any bitterness, jealousy or desire for control that you have been hiding behind a good outward appearance. Finally, remind yourself that God’s correction is proof of His love. He is chasing after the real you, not the polished version.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for passionately pursuing my heart. Forgive me for the times I try to offer You outward actions while keeping my heart distant. Search me, expose any bitterness or wrong motives inside me, and clean me from the inside out. I surrender my whole heart to You today. Amen.