

ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, October 8
Acts 8:1-9:43



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

So far, Acts has traced the Spirit's work in Jerusalem and the immediate growth of the church, alongside the first signs of opposition. By chapter 7, Stephen's bold witness ends in martyrdom, and this moment becomes a turning point. The gospel now begins moving outward, just as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8: from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

In chapters 8–9, we see both expansion and transformation—persecution scatters believers, but God uses it to spread His word; and one of the fiercest opponents of the church is dramatically changed into its most famous missionary. It is worth noticing how this section embodies the paradox of God's kingdom: what looks like defeat actually fuels growth. The scattering of the church might have appeared to be the end of the movement, yet it was the very spark that carried the gospel into new regions. This fits with the larger theme of Acts, where suffering, setbacks, and even human hostility become opportunities for the Spirit to work in surprising ways. Don't forget that this is our *backstory*, and so still today suffering, setbacks, and human hostility are opportunities for the Spirit to work in surprising ways.

We also see the widening embrace of the gospel. Samaritans, who were historically despised by Jews, are included; an Ethiopian eunuch, who by Jewish law would have been considered an outsider, is welcomed and baptized; and even Saul, a persecutor of the church, is not beyond God's reach. Each of these moments shows the gospel breaking through barriers—geographic, ethnic, religious, and personal. The church is not a closed group for the few, but a Spirit-led movement meant for all people.

By the end of this section, it's hard to miss the central message: Jesus is alive, His Spirit is moving, and nothing—neither persecution, prejudice, nor personal pasts—can stop the advance of His kingdom.

The Close-Up for October 8 - Acts 8:1-9:43

Please make sure you read the passage, perhaps even 2-3 times using different versions. We want to provide supplemental material, but what matters most is actually interacting with God's word.

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

8:1–3 – The church faces severe persecution, led by Saul. Instead of crushing the movement, this scattering spreads the gospel outward. What looked like tragedy becomes God's means of mission.

8:4–25 – Philip takes the message to Samaria. The Spirit confirms the inclusion of Samaritans in God's people through signs, conversions, and the apostles' visit. The story of Simon the Sorcerer highlights the danger of trying to control or misuse God's power.

8:26–40 – Philip is led by the Spirit to an Ethiopian eunuch—a foreigner, outsider, and seeker of God. Through Scripture (Isaiah 53), Philip points to Jesus. The eunuch believes, is baptized, and takes the good news back to Africa. The mission is truly going global.

9:1–31 – Saul's dramatic conversion on the Damascus road. The persecutor becomes the preacher. His encounter with the risen Christ, his blindness and healing through Ananias, and his bold witness in Damascus and Jerusalem show God's power to transform anyone. The church, though fearful, eventually embraces him, and the gospel continues to spread.

9:32–43 – The focus shifts back to Peter. In Lydda and Joppa, miraculous healings (Aeneas and Tabitha/Dorcas) confirm the power of Jesus still at work through His apostles. Many people believe. These signs prepare the way for Peter’s next step in Acts 10, where the gospel breaks through to Gentiles.

Some of our Key Themes specifically on display in this section:

- **Persecution and Mission** – What looks like defeat becomes God’s strategy to spread the gospel (8:1–4).
- **The Spirit’s Guidance** – Directs Philip, empowers believers, and confirms the gospel’s expansion.
- **The Reach of the Gospel** – Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch, and eventually Gentiles are welcomed into God’s family.
- **Conversion and Transformation** – Saul’s story is an amazing picture of God’s grace and purpose—no one is beyond His reach or calling.
- **Continuing the Work of Jesus** – Healings and miracles show that Jesus is still at work through His people.

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week’s D-Group:

- How does persecution end up furthering the mission of the church rather than stopping it?
- What does this teach us about how God can use hardship or opposition in our own lives?
- Why is it significant that Samaritans (a despised group by Jews) receive the gospel and the Spirit?
- What do we learn from Simon the Sorcerer about the danger of trying to control or misuse God’s power?
- How can we guard against treating God as a means to an end rather than the Lord of our lives?
- How does Philip’s obedience to the Spirit’s prompting challenge us in our own openness to God’s leading?
- Why is the Ethiopian eunuch such a powerful example of the gospel crossing barriers (geographic, ethnic, religious, personal)? What does teach us about listening to the Spirit and crossing boundaries ourselves?
- What can we learn from Philip’s method of evangelism—starting with Scripture and pointing to Jesus?
- What stands out most to you about Saul’s conversion?
- How does this story shape your view of God’s grace and who He is able to save?
- What role does Ananias play, and what does his obedience teach us about stepping past fear?
- How do Peter’s healings of Aeneas and Tabitha confirm that Jesus is still at work through His people?
- Why do you think Luke includes these miracles here, right before the gospel reaches the Gentiles in Acts 10?
- How should we balance prayer for miracles today with trust in God’s larger mission?
- How do these stories together (persecution, Samaritans, the Ethiopian, Saul, Peter’s healings) show that the gospel is unstoppable?
- Who in your life seems “out of reach” for God, and how does this passage encourage you to pray and trust for their transformation?

A Challenge for this Week: Pray for someone in your life who seems far from God—maybe even hostile to faith. Ask God to work in ways you cannot see, and to give you the courage to be a witness when He opens the door.