

# STUDY NOTES

## *The Acts of the Apostles*

### A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

[WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS](http://WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS) - BRIAN KRUCKENBERG

The following content is based on the message “The Power of God” spoken on 04/03/16 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

## THE SCRIPTURE

*And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. <sup>2</sup>Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup>But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*

*<sup>4</sup>Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. <sup>6</sup>And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. <sup>7</sup>For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was much joy in that city.*

*<sup>9</sup>But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.*

*<sup>10</sup>They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” <sup>11</sup>And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. <sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. <sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup>who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup>or he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup>Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!*

## POWER COMES THROUGH RESURRECTION

As Jesus promised in Acts 1, the Gospel would spread from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria and to the outer most parts of the earth. In this passage we see that coming to pass as Philip takes the message of Jesus to the region of Samaria.

This happens right after Stephen is killed for preaching the name of Jesus. The local power brokers thought they could snuff out the movement of Jesus by killing its leaders. They were wrong. They didn’t realize that the power of God comes through persecution.

(It is interesting that the “apostles” stay behind in Jerusalem and the others are scattered. There are likely many reasons for this but it does teach us that God will send whom He chooses to be on mission for Him. You don’t have to be an expert or even a full-time pastor. You just have to go and tell people about Jesus.)

From the beginning of the church until now, it has always faced persecution. In the 1920’s the USSR formed the “League of the Militant Godless” in an effort to stamp out the Christian faith. Leader of the League, Yemelian Yaroslavsky, found the stubbornness of the Christian faith:

**“Christianity is like a nail. The harder you strike it, the deeper it goes.”**

The scripture is consistent in its teaching that suffering and hardship are a part of the Christian walk.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.  
*Romans 8:16-17*

- Why do you think the church grows when it faces the most severe opposition?
- Do you have any examples in your life of being persecuted for your belief in Jesus?
- Might God call you someday to go and tell others about Him like He did Philip? What might this look like?

## POWER COMES TO PROVIDE FOR OTHERS

In this passage we meet a man named Simon. He called himself great and others called him this as well. Simon was about to learn that the power that God gives isn’t to make us great, but to make much of Jesus. Simon desired the power of God so that he could manipulate the Spirit to do his will. But, you can’t manipulate the Spirit; The Holy Spirit is always God’s “gift” for the the good of others and for the church to be built up. If people are seeking power from God for their own fame and name, they might get a fleeting reward but not one that lasts in heaven.

## POWER COMES THROUGH THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Not only was Simon seeking power for himself, he was also seeking it in the wrong things. He was using magic (demonic forces) to do miracles and impress others. He apparently earned a good living doing this because he offered to by the ability to wield the power of God.

Today it is more common for us to seek power through ourselves. We might call this the power of the human spirit. While most of us love human interest stories and celebrate when we hear the story of someone overcoming long odds to succeed, we must understand that true power comes through the person of Jesus Christ. The power of the Spirit of God overcomes everything, and we need His Spirit to get us through everything we face in life.

In this passage we see that the believed when Philip preached Jesus:

<sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. *Acts 8:12*

The miracles that were done were no doubt amazing. Miracles can assist faith **but** never can be a substitute for it. When the miraculous assumes priority over the name of Jesus, it can get in the way of the faith. We see this in the story of Simon.

- Have you ever sought power or position for your own personal gain? Why do you think we might do this?
- Talk about a time where you or someone else perhaps relied too heavily on their own “human spirit” in an effort to overcome a challenging situation.

## POWER CANNOT BE PURCHASED

It was quite natural for Simon, a new convert to the faith, to try and buy the Holy Spirit power. While we may not have the same amount of money that Simon did we all have a form of “currency” that we use to “buy” what we want. **People typically seek power by using their own form of “currency.”** In our culture, power is most definitely purchased, but in the economy of God, it isn't. God can't be bought off. God doesn't need what you have. He loves you and desires you to be His child but He needs nothing from you. God doesn't make deals. Unfortunately, we have a sin nature, our flesh, that constantly battles with the Power of the Holy Spirit and we fall back into trying to get power or influence in the wrong ways.

**This can happen through:**

- **Material means.** We try to purchase the power we need.
- **Through relationship manipulation.** We attempt to get power by flirting with a certain person. We might try to use sex, or the lack of sex, to control someone, even our own spouse.

- What is it that you have that you are using to get what you want?
- How are you seeking the power you desire?

We even do this in church. If we aren't careful we can start going to church to try and earn favor with God. If this is our attitude we might start to feel like **God owes us!** **You may be seeking favor from God so that He will do things for you. I thought if I did this, then God would do that. If I come to church and do the right things then God will protect my family, save my marriage, give me a spouse, etc.**

But we already learned that God doesn't need anything we have. He loves us and He sent Jesus to die for us. He doesn't owe us more than that. Yet He desires to give good things to His children.

- Why are you coming to church?

## POWER COMES THROUGH THE PROCESS OF RE-PENTANCE

Even though Simon is saved and confesses Jesus as Lord, he still slips back into old ways of thinking. This is common for new believers and we should remember that while we are reborn in an instant, changing and becoming more like Christ is a life-long process. This does not excuse sin! To the contrary, Peter deals very directly with the sin and wickedness in Simon (see v. 20). Simon is called to repent and ask for forgiveness because he was using his old ways in an attempt to secure a new power.

- *Have you ever expected mature Christian behavior from a new Christian? Have you ever expected Christian behavior from a non-Christian?*
- *Have you ever seen someone who has been a Christian for a long time try to excuse their sin or the sin of another?*
- *How can you strike the balance between recognizing that holiness is a process while still treating sin very seriously?*