

DIGGING DEEPER**“WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?”—WEEK 3****OPENING QUESTION:**

What area outlined by Pastor James regarding our church’s future and mission most excites you or interests you?

**ACTS 8:9-25 (NIV)**

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." ¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. ¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."
²⁰ Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." ²⁴ Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." ²⁵ When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages."

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

- Who is Simon? What was he? What was he like? What’s the issue/problem he reveals?
- Who are Peter and John? Where are they and why? What role do they play in this part of the story?
- What other observations strike you in this short, but challenging passage?

Discussion Questions:

1. In this passage, Simon is called a 'sorcerer.' What does the Bible (including our passage) reveal about 'sorcery'/'Magic'? Why is what Simon is doing potentially dangerous for both believers and unbelievers? On another note, some Christians flee from anything that smacks of the 'mystical' or 'magical' - including books, movies, and shows. Do you think that is what God is prohibiting?
2. When confronted with the real power/miracles of God, the parlor tricks of Simon pale in comparison and the Samaritan people begin to believe in/follow Christ (including Simon) and are baptized with water. Do you see this type of conversion happening in your world today? Why or why not? Perhaps a few members of your group can share how the power of God helped reveal Christ in their lives and brought them to Himself!
3. The Apostles Peter and John visit Samaria (the last time John connected with Samaria he wanted to destroy them—see Luke 9:51-55) to see what God has been doing among the Samaritans. They have already believed in Jesus and been baptized. But, now (vv. 15-17), something different happens. Talk about this unique spiritual experience (compare with Acts 10:44-47) in your group and discuss the different interpretations within Christianity regarding this passage.
4. In vv. 18-24 Simon reveals something about the condition of his heart (or at least his understanding). How is his understanding regarding the power of God somewhat like ours/others at times? The disciples rebuke him quite harshly for his incorrect beliefs. Should disciples do that today (even with new believers)? How did Simon respond to the rebuke of the disciples? What can we learn from his response? How should we react when we are rebuked?
5. What's the one thing from this study that most impacted you? What do you sense God calling you to do in response to His word? Be as specific as you can.

PRAYER NOTES FROM PASTOR JAMES

- *Pray for those who are tempted to counterfeit God through the use of magic, sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and other truly Satanic means. Pray for those who are trapped by these false religious beliefs.*
- *Pray for the authentic power of God to overflow out of our lives and into the hearts of seekers/skeptics so that they may see His power and give their lives to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!*
- *Pray for missionaries who have a heart for God to be sent to 'Samaritan' communities all around us. Pray for revival to break out and for people to be set free, born again, and Baptized in the Lord!*
- *Pray for hearts to rebuke where/when we must and for receptive/repentant hearts when we are rebuked!*