



Study 8—Miracle Maker Meets His Match

Acts 8:4-8:40

Think it over...

Some Christians claim that miraculous healings and signs and wonders are part of their everyday experience - it's simply a matter of faith. If you have enough faith, you'll be healed from every illness, you'll be rich, and whatever you claim "in faith" will be yours. (If you haven't heard any of this stuff, try watching early morning TV).

Others, perhaps under the influence of modern scientific thinking, go to the other extreme, and say that miracles simply can't happen.

What do YOU think? Should we expect to see MORE miracles today? Are we lacking faith? Would more people become believers if we could do more miracles?

Talk it over with your group.

Read Acts 8:4-40

At this point in Acts, the focus shifts from Stephen to Philip. Look back to 6:5, and you'll notice he's the second of the seven men appointed to distribute food to the widows. Funny thing... like Stephen, the next we hear of him is that he's proclaiming the gospel! For some reason, the focus has shifted from the apostles to this second rank of gospel workers - perhaps because they're the ones who are the first to do what Jesus said, and break the boundaries of Israel. In fact, this is a very significant point in the book!

a) Why do you think Acts 8:5 should be seen as an important point in the book? (Hint: where have you heard about Samaria and it's inhabitants before?)

b) According to 8:6, what was the effect of the miraculous signs Philip did?

'Give us a sign!' In this case, the signs Philip did, made the Samaritans pay close attention to his words. Often, contemporary signs and wonders have exactly the opposite effect. In fact, some high profile personalities perform so-called signs and wonders at the expense of proclaiming the gospel. We need to take care here! Like the apostles, Philip's priority was MINISTRY OF THE WORD. (See 6:4)

Meet Simon the Sorcerer

c) Simon was able to do some amazing tricks - whether genuine or fake we don't know. In what ways does he use his abilities to his own advantage?

How does this contrast with the example of the apostles?
(See 3:12-13, 4:7-10; and 14:11-15)

d) What is it that turns the people from following Simon to following Philip?

e) What do you think motivated Simon to "believe and be baptised" too? (V13)

The Apostles Check it Out...

f) Remember that the Samaritans were traditionally enemies of the Jews. What do you see as the possible significance of the events of verses 14 to 17?

NOTE: This was a huge turning point in the history of the Kingdom of God. The Samaritans and the Jews were related races, but for hundreds of years they had been separated by huge hostility. The Samaritans had a temple of their own, and were viewed with suspicion by the Jews. As Philip is preaching "the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" in Samaria (8:12) he's taking a phenomenal step. He's inviting the Samaritans to *join in!* It's likely that the Apostles were called in to make the step "legitimate" - and the giving of the Spirit at their arrival marked God's approval too!

g) What is Simon's reaction to the coming of the Spirit?

What was it that he was longing for?

How does Peter respond?

In what ways do people today repeat Simon's mistake?

h) In this chapter, we've seen a number of right and wrong responses to the Spirit, to the signs and wonders of the apostles, and to the preaching of the gospel. Try to summarise these responses under those three headings...

	THE SPIRIT	SIGNS & WONDERS	THE WORD
RIGHT RESPONSES			
WRONG RESPONSES			

It's easy to long for all the wrong things! Simon loved to be the centre of attention, and longed for the same powers as the apostles. He wanted this power for all the wrong reasons.

From the things you've summarised above, how should we deal with these same issues (and temptations) when they arise?

Have you revised your ideas from the start of this study?

Because of the Easter Holidays, there are no growth group studies for the next 2 weeks.

BLOKES WEEKEND AWAY



April 20-21

Bribie Island

"Poverty Creek" Camp Site

The Guys go bush!

Cost: ????

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