



ACTS OF THE
Holy Spirit

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CONNECT GROUPS

28 & 29 JAN 2023

“THE SPIRIT WHO SENDS WITNESSES”

ACTS 8.1-4, 26-40

Suggestions for Making the Most of your Group Time

1. Begin by reviewing the video of the sermon, preferably before you meet together (see <https://www.brmc.org.sg/services/sermons/>).
2. Read the Scripture passage together, before entering into discussion.
3. Spend time on both question components, namely:
 - a. Comprehension (*Who? What? When? Why? How?*);
 - b. Application / Transformation (*So what? What action should I take? Perspective should I adopt? Value should I uphold? Emotion should I embrace? Habit should I develop? Desire should I nurture? etc*)
4. Discuss as few or as many questions as best fits your group’s current context and present stage in life.
5. Before ending your group session, allocate some time (15-20 min) to pray with and for one another.

Discussion Questions

1. From your review of the sermon and your reading of the Scripture passage, recap the key points of this sermon.

2. In 8.1-4, the Bible tells us that the young Christian community was persecuted and forced to scatter. They could no longer meet freely at a common central location and had to flee into different regions.

a) How did God use persecution and suffering for his good, gracious, and glorious purposes? (Refer back to God's promise in Acts 1.8)

b) Christians then were openly persecuted for openly proclaiming the gospel and living by it. While the church in Singapore today is not persecuted in the same way, we are called to bear witness and live by the gospel, and will face suffering and persecution in a different form. Have you ever faced persecution or suffering for being a Christian? How did you respond back then? How would you respond differently today?

c) Reading through the Acts of the Apostles, persecution and suffering for the sake of Jesus' good news was not something strange or uncommon among the early Christians. (Note: we are not to deliberately seek out suffering. Rather, the point is, sometimes persecution seeks us out.) Consider Christians today: How willing are we to proclaim the gospel of Jesus boldly? To what extent are we prepared to endure persecution and suffering for Christ's sake? Does anything need to change in your CG?

3. In 8.26-35, Philip explained the Scripture passage from Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian eunuch and used it as a starting point to explain the good news of Jesus.

a) Over the next 3 minutes, each CG participant should select a bible passage that you would turn to, to explain the gospel about Jesus Messiah to a non-Christian. Share with one another your choices and how the passage bears witness to God's good news. (Do take this exercise not as a stressful test or exam, but as an encouragement and inspiration for one another!)

b) How comfortable would you be to meet a non-Christian friend to open the Bible and use it to explain the gospel to them? What might hold you back, and why?

c) The Alpha Course is a small-group-based, multi-week programme that welcomes and helps non-Christians clarify their questions about this good news of Jesus Christ. Would your CG consider hosting Alpha or another similar programme, as a means of bearing witness of Jesus? Why, or why not?

4. From this week's sermon and Scripture text, we learn that no one is excluded from the gospel of Christ, from that good news of grace and life in Jesus the Messiah. The Ethiopian eunuch – regardless of his nationality, skin colour, physical condition, or social status – encountered the Holy Spirit's power in the Word of God and in Philip the Evangelist.

Virtually none of us will disagree that God invites everyone, that the good news of Jesus Christ is offered to all. Yet, while we may affirm this in principle, is this matched in our actions?

a) As a group, can you name 2-3 groups of people to whom you would hesitate to bear witness about Jesus and his offer of good news?

b) Reflect together: Why you are less likely to share the gospel with these groups? How does this passage challenge your perspective? How would you act differently?

Sidebox

Bible toolkit: Look for Recurring Theme Tunes running through Bible Books

Often bible books may have certain central themes or ideas that run repeatedly throughout the book. These help us to keep track of the main emphases of the biblical author. Acts has a clear example of a “Recurring Theme Tune” like this, clearly described in Acts 1:8 – that by the Holy Spirit, the gospel of Jesus will go out and be proclaimed across all the earth.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

This Recurring Theme Tune continues to unfold through to chapter 8:

Acts 2:4-6	All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. [...] each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.	The disciples receive the Holy Spirit, and are empowered to bear witness to Jesus. Jews living in many nations hear the good news about Jesus proclaimed in Jerusalem.
Acts 6:7	And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem [...]	The fruit of the gospel multiplies Jerusalem
Acts 8:1	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.	Persecution causes witnesses to be scattered from Jerusalem outward into Judea and Samaria
Acts 8:4-6	Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did. .	The gospel goes out to Samaria
Acts 8:27- 28, 36	Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home [...] And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”	The Ethiopian eunuch comes to worship in Jerusalem, and brings the good news of Christ back home (towards the end of the earth!)

What’s the big deal?

A book like Acts is made up of many narratives that can seem to just go on and on... (Pentecost, the fellowship of believers, healings, Ananias and Sapphira, the stoning of Stephen, ...)

While each of these narratives have their own lessons and messages, they all contribute to the big picture and purpose that God marked out in Acts 1:8, that by the Holy Spirit, the gospel will go out to the ends of the earth!

When we remember this, we are reminded that **God is sovereign and powerful to carry out his plan**, even despite opposition from within the Church (like in Ananias and Sapphira), or without (with persecution and stoning). And if the Holy Spirit can go through such lengths to bring the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ, we can have utmost confidence that **the same Holy Spirit within us will help us to witness to those around us in Singapore too!**

Prayer Items

5. Pray for one another, that we would be empowered by God to live out the specific areas of application and transformation raised during the discussion time. Pray also for any needs that were mentioned.