

Acts: Responses to the Gospel

[Acts 8:1-40](#)

After Stephen is stoned, the persecution of the church intensifies, and the gospel begins to spread throughout the world. Like Simon, some hear it, respond positively, and still harbor sin in their hearts. Others, like the Ethiopian eunuch, are captivated wholly by the gospel and submit joyfully in full obedience to Jesus. To be effective witnesses of the gospel, we too must humbly align our lives with God's mission.

Application

1. God is able to use Philip because he is in step with the Holy Spirit. If we want to be used by God, we also must be captivated by his mission so we can respond when the Spirit prompts us. What captures your imagination now (a relationship, career, house, hobby, travel, etc.)? Consider the idea that your passion for neutral or even good things can numb you from being captivated with God's mission.
2. Our lives should be structured by divine priorities so we can be useful witnesses for the gospel. How is your life ordered now? How can you move towards prioritizing giving, serving, and being in community with other believers?
3. Once the Ethiopian eunuch hears and believes the gospel, he immediately obeys and identifies with Jesus through baptism. If you are a believer who has not been baptized, what is keeping you from taking that step? Who can you talk to about that decision?

Key Points

- After Stephen is stoned, a great wave of persecution scatters the believers at Jerusalem, and in turn, the gospel begins to spread throughout the world.
- Saul, who would later be converted and become Paul, is energized to further persecute believers. His eventual conversion illustrates that God can take our greatest shame, pain, or guilt and use it for his good purposes.
- Philip travels to Samaria and preaches the gospel. In this most unlikely place, people believe and are added to the church.
- Simon, a sorcerer in Samaria, also believes. However, he still seeks personal power, and Peter rebukes him. Likewise, all spiritual leaders must be courageous and discerning when dealing with sin in their midst. We cannot call what is unholy, holy.

- When the Holy Spirit prompts him, Philip shares the gospel with a powerful and wealthy Ethiopian eunuch. God uses both Philip's humility and the eunuch's obedience to expand his kingdom.
- Only when we are in step with the Holy Spirit, connected to God's mission, and focused on structuring our lives around God's Word can we be used as witnesses for Jesus.

Other Scripture References

[Romans 9-11](#)

[Genesis 12:3](#)

[Acts 1:8](#)

[Romans 1](#)

[Isaiah 53](#)

[Isaiah 56](#)

[Luke 16](#)

[Luke 24](#)