

“A.D. The Bible Continues”- Week 7

“A Wider Circle”

New Life Community Church

INTRODUCTION

As Saul’s persecution of the early church intensified, and believers scattered, Philip chose to go to Samaria. The Jews and Samaritans were bitterly divided for generations. Samaritans were despised and rejected by the Jews. But when Philip brought the Gospel to Samaria, he followed Jesus’ example, and broke down cultural barriers to extend God’s love to those who desperately needed to hear it. This study considers how we can extend God’s love to the “Samaritans” of our day.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Have you ever experienced exclusion from a group you wanted to join?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Look to the Edges

Q1. Read Acts 8:4-5, 1:8; Luke 4:18, 5:32

Sometimes we are called to an unlikely mission field. As Philip fled persecution in Jerusalem he chose the city of Samaria, a people despised by the Jews. This scenario had been prophesied by Jesus and enabled through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). To whom did Jesus direct His ministry according to Luke 4:18 and 5:32? When you consider those who are captives and oppressed in our culture, which groups comes to mind?

Listen with your Heart

Q2. Read John 4:5-25

As you read the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, note that He both answered her questions and posed questions of His own. Why do you think He carried on this conversation rather than simply proclaiming to her that He was Messiah? What was gained by allowing her to share her experiences and hurts? Discuss with your group how “listening with your heart” might benefit a person who is an outcast, and how it can change your own heart.

Identify the Samaritans around you

Q3. Read Romans 12:16, Luke 14:13, James 2:5

In going to Samaria, Philip associated with the outcasts. Who are the “people of low position” God calls us to? (see above verses) The ministry of Teen Challenge showed us this weekend how “those who heard God’s call” reached out to those in need. With your group, make a list of the ways you can make a connection with someone who might be the “Samaritan” in your life.

Right Thing, Wrong Reason

Q4. Read Acts 8:9, 18-23

Simon the magician is described as someone who amazed the crowds and declared “he himself was somebody great.” Even after he had believed Philip and was baptized, he tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from Peter. Desiring the Holy Spirit was not in itself wrong, but what did Peter reveal about the condition of Simon’s heart? What are some ways we might seek the right thing for the wrong reason? What helps to keep us from falling into that trap ourselves?

Expanding God’s Kingdom

Q5. Read Acts 8:5-8, Acts 4:11-12; Luke 9:2, 10:9; 11:20

Philip advanced God’s kingdom powerfully in Samaria. He proclaimed Christ first and then saw the healing of those who were physically and spiritually captive, because it is only in the name of Jesus we find true freedom. This weekend we heard the testimony of Teen Challenge members who were similarly saved and released in Jesus’ name and in His power. Do you know of anyone, who is under physical and/or spiritual bondage (captivity)? What are some ways you can bring the kingdom of God and the power of Jesus’ name to set them free?

WRAP-UP

God wants to expand His kingdom to the outcasts of our culture. They may be held captive by addictions like those who came to Teen Challenge, or they might be the poor, those handicapped or literally in prison. Whoever they are, He calls us to go to the captives, listen with our hearts to their hurts and bring the power of God to set them free, keeping our own hearts right before Him. In doing this we can help to advance the Kingdom of God.

Memory Verse

- and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Luke 9:2 ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space) _____

Challenge: Ask God to widen your heart with His grace and love, and widen your circle of influence as you embrace those on the outside with open arms and the good news of Jesus’s love this week.

