



# LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

JANUARY–MARCH 2016

## WEEK 5

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL

*This study guide should be used the week following the sermon it supplements.*

### MAIN TEXT: Acts 8:4-25

<sup>4</sup>Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. <sup>6</sup>And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. <sup>7</sup>For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was much joy in that city. <sup>9</sup>But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. <sup>10</sup>They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “this man is the power of God that is called Great.” <sup>11</sup>And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. <sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptised he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. <sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup>who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup>for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup>Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, “may your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup>You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

### GETTING STARTED

This is not the first instance that the Kingdom of God was preached to the town of Samaria. See if people can remember where in Jesus’ ministry the same town encountered him for the first time. *Hint:* John 4. Who were the Samaritans and what was their relationship like with the Jews (see also Luke 10:25-37)?

### DIGGING DEEPER

1. Acts 8:1-4 shows us how God gets his people where he wants them. Discuss the significance of where Philip ended up. Do you have Philip’s absolute commitment to preach the gospel wherever and whenever? If so, how do you stay motivated? If not, why do you think that is?
2. Do people pay attention to your efforts to *Share the Gospel*? Discuss how ‘proclaiming Jesus’ and ‘displaying signs’ might look (or does look) in your own life.
3. Does anyone have any encouraging stories of God’s kingdom ‘breaking out’ and being witnessed by non-Christians?
4. This is the same John who wanted to call down fire upon Samaritans due to their unbelief (Luke 9). Discuss how the gospel transforms a person’s heart towards their enemies so radically. Have you experienced this kind of *Transforming Grace* (or do you need to)?
5. Why was it so important for the Apostles to go and make sure these new Christians received the Holy Spirit? Is the continual filling of the Holy Spirit of a similar importance in your own life?
6. Looking over the whole passage, what warnings can we take from the story of Simon the Sorcerer? Are you ever in danger of falling foul of similar (self-important) behaviours (e.g. trying to claim undue glory and honour, making yourself look good)?
7. Having considered Peter’s instruction for Simon to ‘repent’, John Stott expresses concern over Simon’s final response. Why might Stott have such a reaction? Think about your own repentance; who is the emphasis usually upon?

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<sup>22</sup>Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” <sup>24</sup>And Simon answered, “pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

<sup>25</sup>Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

## COMING UP

Alpha Course | 11 Jan-14 Mar

Beta Course | 11 Jan-22 Feb

Commission Students and 20s Conference | 26-28 Feb

## NEXT STEPS

1. Can you imagine our Sunday services being filled with prostitutes, ex-offenders and the various other demographics that churches have famously ‘turned away’? Would anything need to change about you personally in order for them to feel welcomed and loved?

2. Are there people in your life or in the world that you would be reluctant to go and share the gospel? Pray with someone that God would melt your heart in the same way he did with the disciples. Ask them to keep you accountable to this prayer long-term.

3. What might change in the church if people were more eagerly and more honestly thirsting for the Holy Spirit to fall upon them in power? How do you feel about this (expectant/apathetic/scared/intrigued...)?

4. Set aside some time individually and as a group to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, “how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who *ask* him!” (Luke 11:13).

5. Mull over/memorise the following verse this week and pray that it could be written of you:

*“When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said.”* (Acts 8:6)

## PRAYER

- Praise God for the power of his gospel to cross and transform every social barrier.
- Thank God that he even allowed the message of Christ to reach you.
- Thank God for the current diversity at Chapel and ask that he would bring in even more types of people.
- Ask God to show you and send you to those that are so often neglected by the world (and even the Church).
- Pray for fresh power to proclaim Christ everywhere you go and for the signs to support your message.
- Pray for ministries like CAP, Foodbank and the Gate, which are regularly meeting people in the most difficult life situations.