



A Five-Day Devotional Journey

April 20 – 26, 2008

Acts 8:1-25

He, being dead, yet speaketh.

Hebrews 11:4 KJV

# Making Ripples:

## Plunging into your Samaria

### 1 They all became missionaries

**Read.** Acts 8:1-4 Message

That set off a terrific persecution of the church in Jerusalem. The believers were all scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. All, that is, but the apostles. Good and brave men buried Stephen, giving him a solemn funeral—not many dry eyes that day! And Saul just went wild, devastating the church, entering house after house after house, dragging men and women off to jail. Forced to leave home base, the followers of Jesus all became missionaries. Wherever they were scattered, they preached the Message about Jesus.

Optional further reading: Acts 22:1-5; 26:4-11

**Think.**

- What drove Saul to so savagely persecute and hound this new body of believers? How did the church respond?
- When's the last time you were on the receiving end of some persecution? What happened? How did you respond?
- How do you think you would have responded to this outbreak of persecution if you had been a believer in Jerusalem:
  - a) laid low and waited for the storm to pass
  - b) shouted, "Bring it on!"
  - c) tried to blend back into the Jewish mainstream
  - d) found a new place to live
  - e) I have no clue and hope I never have to find out
  - f) other \_\_\_\_\_
- As a believer, how often do you see yourself as a missionary? What is your current mission field? How compelled are you to share the message of Jesus in your words and deeds? Why?

**Pray.**

Lord, increase my faith to see in the darker hues of hard times and persecution the hidden opportunities in them of scattering the precious seed of Jesus all around. Give me fresh eyes of faith through which to see all of life's turnings and to embrace your purposes in them.

**Live.**

"In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance..." 2 Cor. 2:14-15 Meditate on this through the day.

I like what Mike Breaux says in his book, *Making Ripples*:

I wonder how you get into a swimming pool. Any chance you might be a toe dipper? You stick your big toe in and you go, "Wooooo, that is cold!" And then your ankles, woooo that's cold! Then your calves, woooo; your knees, woooo; your thighs, woooo! It's miserable! You know, what's really the best way to do it, don't you? Cannonball! You take a running start, tuck up your knees, hit the pool, and water goes flying everywhere! The ripples go out, hit the side, and come back in. They go back out and they come back in. They go back out and they come back in. If you're really big, that just keeps happening — and if the sides of the pool weren't there, they would just keep going and going, long after you make your initial splash. I think that's what God had in mind for us. He's saying, "Trust me — jump! Make a splash with your one and only life, and we can make ripples together. Live your life in such a way that you touch someone else's life. Then, they'll touch someone's life, and they'll touch someone's life — and long after you're dead and gone, the ripples will still be going strong.

Mike Breaux, *Making Ripples*, p. 70

**We all make ripples. We all have impact beyond what we can even imagine. It's not just a feel-good sentiment, it's reality.**

**Think about it.**

**Enraged Saul the Inquisitor/Persecutor Extraordinaire madly ransacks Jerusalem hunting for Christ followers, his thirst for blood only stoked by Stephen's death. And he makes quite the splash! Dark ripples literally blow Jerusalem believers out of the shallow end of their Jerusalem pool — and plunges them outward into the deeper waters of Judea. And one believer, Philip, does his own cannonball, plunging deep into the uncharted waters of Samaria. Whether by burning bush or Spirit nudge or the simple shrug of a "Why not?," Philip plunges in, the ripples rushing up to Jerusalem and back, and going out yet again as even now they lap at the shores of our faith, inviting us to take our own plunge.**

## 2) Clear signs of God's action

**Read.** Acts 8:5-8 Message

Going down to a Samaritan city, Philip proclaimed the Message of the Messiah. When the people heard what he had to say and saw the miracles, the clear signs of God's action, they hung on his every word. Many who could neither stand nor walk were healed that day. The evil spirits protested loudly as they were sent on their way. And what joy in the city!

Optional further reading: John 4:1-42

**Think.**

- What is the significance of the message of Jesus coming to Samaria? What cultural boundaries is Philip crossing as he does this?
- Summarize Philip's ministry in Samaria. What did it look like? How was it received? What do you learn from Philip about kingdom ministry?
- What cultural/social/religious boundaries might the Lord be calling you to cross right now with the message of Jesus? How will you get started?

**Pray.**

Lord, captivate me with your grace that today I may hang on your every word. Display clear signs of your action in and through my life that your joy might spread through me.

**Live.**

Cross cultural boundaries — make plans to go on a short term mission to a place that will challenge you.

## 4) The Spirit hadn't yet fallen on them

**Read.** Acts 8:14-17 Message

When the apostles in Jerusalem received the report that Samaria had accepted God's Message, they sent Peter and John down to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit. Up to this point they had only been baptized in the name of the Master Jesus; the Holy Spirit hadn't yet fallen on them. Then the apostles laid their hands on them and they did receive the Holy Spirit.

**Think.**

- How do the apostles in Jerusalem respond to news that the gospel had been welcomed in Samaria? What do they do?
- What do you think the hold up was in the Samaritans receiving the empowering of the Spirit? Why did it have to be through the apostles' hands in this case? Why didn't they have a Pentecost experience like the Jewish believers in Acts 2?
- As a Samaritan, how do you think you would have felt in response to this change-up in divine method:
  - a. cheated — like a second class citizen
  - b. blessed — the apostles *themselves* laid hands on me
  - c. confused — why this way and not another?
  - d. indifferent — I don't care how God does it as long as he does!
  - e. other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pray.**

Holy Spirit, come when you will, how you will, where you will. Just come upon me and empower me for service in shaping the world around me.

**Live.**

Look for an opportunity to pray for divine blessing & empowerment on someone today.

## 3) Fascinated with the God-signs

**Read.** Acts 8:9-13 Message

Previous to Philip's arrival, a certain Simon had practiced magic in the city, posing as a famous man and dazzling all the Samaritans with his wizardry. He had them all, from little children to old men, eating out of his hand. They all thought he had supernatural powers, and called him "the Great Wizard." He had been around a long time and everyone was more or less in awe of him. But when Philip came to town announcing the news of God's kingdom and proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ, they forgot Simon and were baptized, becoming believers right and left! Even Simon himself believed and was baptized. From that moment he was like Philip's shadow, so fascinated with all the God-signs and miracles that he wouldn't leave Philip's side.

**Think.**

- What is your take on Simon? What would you say "made him tick" before he met Philip and heard and saw his message? What seems to be making him tick after his conversion experience?
- Take a personal inventory of your own before and after life experience with Jesus. What motivated and moved you before Jesus came into your life? What move and motivates you now? In what specific ways have you really changed?
- Where in your life might you, like Simon, be posing? How can you become more real and authentic?

**Pray.**

Lord, deliver me from all posturing and posing; let me be real before you and others. Let me be your shadow. Let me be totally sold out to you.

**Live.**

Be real with God and others today.

## 5) Change your ways — and now!

**Read.** Acts 8:18-25 Message

When Simon saw that the apostles by merely laying on hands conferred the Spirit, he pulled out his money, excited, and said, "Sell me your secret! Show me how you did that! How much do you want? Name your price!" Peter said, "To hell with your money! And you along with it. Why, that's unthinkable — trying to buy God's gift! You'll never be part of what God is doing by striking bargains and offering bribes. Change your ways — and now! Ask the Master to forgive you for trying to use God to make money. I can see this is an old habit with you; you reek with money-lust." "Oh!" said Simon, "pray for me! Pray to the Master that nothing like that will ever happen to me!" And with that, the apostles were on their way, continuing to witness and spread the Message of God's salvation, preaching in every Samaritan town they passed through on their return to Jerusalem.

**Think.**

- Where does Simon go wrong? What does he reveal about his true heart condition? How does Peter diagnose his condition? What is Peter's prescription? What further insight do you see into Simon in his comeback request to Peter?
- What do you think of Peter's "rebuke" style? Does it seem a bit strong to you? Just right? Why?
- How do you handle situations where you have to be a "heavy" and bring significant correction to someone?

**Pray.**

Lord Jesus, don't rebuke me in your wrath — but do rebuke and correct and realign me with your purposes so that I hear and move.

**Live.**

Lovingly but directly speak truth when and where it's needed today.