

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Although Stephen's death sparked great persecution against the church (Acts 8:1b), it was also the catalyst for a great scattering. One of those who scattered was Philip, a fellow deacon who had served alongside Stephen. (6:5) Philip willingly entered enemy territory—Samaria being home to the Samaritans, the sworn enemy of the Jews—and because of his faithfulness, unclean spirits were driven out. Many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. (8:7) Philip's obedience in preaching the gospel caused there to be much joy in the city as Samaria received the word of God and believed.

However, among those who believed and were baptized was Simon the magician. (v.13) Simon practiced magic in the city and amazed the people (v.9). He himself was amazed upon seeing the signs and great miracles that Philip performed through the Holy Spirit (v.13), and desired the Spirit's power for himself. He offered to pay the apostles if they would teach him what they were doing, and was rebuked harshly by Peter for it because his heart was not right before God. (v.21) Peter saw straight through Simon's intentions: he could see that Simon was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. (v.23) He could see how Simon had focused on the gift instead of the Giver, and how he had missed the point entirely.

Church, are there moments where we do the same? Where we've entirely misunderstood the heart of God? What does it mean for us to seek, serve, and scatter? What heart postures do we approach these three things with? Rather than approaching Him only when we want something from Him, or because we are afraid of the consequences of failing to seek Him—let us seek God because He is the one thing we desire. Let us serve Him from a place of love and gratitude. Let us scatter because we know there is no other name (4:12), and to Him should all glory be given.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Was there something that you desperately wanted as a child? What was it? Were you able to obtain it? Why do you think you wanted it so much?

Is there anything that you desperately want right now, and what is it? To what lengths would you go to obtain it? Why do you think you want it so much?

QUESTION TWO:

As Peter rebukes Simon, he cuts straight to the heart. He tells Simon that he is in the “gall of bitterness” and in the “bond of inquiry”. (v.23) What do you think that means? What did Peter see in Simon’s heart?

As we discuss the things that we want, what do you think is in your own heart? Are there any hidden reasons for why you desire certain things so badly? Do you desire them over God, or have they caused you to not be right before Him?

QUESTION THREE:

What do you think your heart posture for seeking, serving, and scattering looks like? Is there any way where you are not right before God? What might you need to confess and repent from, and what are some concrete steps you can take to change? How can your life group members pray for and help to keep you accountable?