

# Acts 8:1-8

## August 10, 2025



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

Stephen was unjustly martyred, but His sacrifice was not in vain. God used it for His glory. Stephen's death triggered massive persecution for the church, causing them to scatter throughout Judea and Samaria, but as the believers scattered, so did the gospel message.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What have you been learning in our study of Acts? Is there anything you'd like to share?**

**Have you ever had a time where a seemingly negative event led to a positive outcome? Share as appropriate.**



Last week, we read about Stephen being stoned to death by an enraged mob led by the Sanhedrin. Today, we'll read about what happened in the wake of Stephen's martyrdom, and how God used a terrible situation for His glory.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 8:1-3.

**What happened to the believers after Stephen was martyred?**

**How might the believers have been tempted to respond? How would you have been tempted to respond?**

**How do you see God continuing to work in these verses?**

Last week, we read that “a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:58) kept watch over the coats of the men who stoned Stephen. In chapter 8, Luke confirmed that Saul agreed with putting Stephen to death. Not only did Saul agree, but he also zealously supported and participated in extreme persecution of the church. He ravaged the church, dragging off men and women of faith and throwing them into prison for their belief in Jesus (v.3).

But this impact wasn't only around Saul. The effect for believers following Stephen's death was broad: persecution and scattering. The persecution was directed at the believers in Jerusalem, and, while the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, the hostile environment there drove many believers to scatter.

Luke noted that, during the persecution of the church, Stephen was buried, and his death was mourned. God works even in the tragic moments. God works in the unfair, the unjust, in the persecution, and in the moments when we are mourning tragedy. God works through all circumstances, even the negative ones.

What the enemy intended for evil, God would use for good.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 8:4-8.

**What positive outcome do we learn about in these verses?**

**How do you see God working in this passage?**

**When was a time you experienced spiritual growth following a time of difficulty? How did the experience of difficulty contribute to that season of growth?**



Think back to Acts 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

These verses describe this promise being fulfilled in real time.

Stephen’s death was tragic and unjust, but as always, God can use any situation for good. As the believers spread throughout Judea and Samaria, so did the gospel. Many have interpreted the “go” in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) to mean “as you go” or “as you are going,” tell others about Jesus. In these verses, the believers “went on their way preaching the word” (v.4). As they went on their way, even in less-than-ideal circumstances, they told others about Jesus.

How remarkable that the terrifying event of the first Christian martyrdom didn’t turn them away from their faith. Instead, God used it to bring strength and resolve to the believers. This is evidence by the fact that they didn’t stop sharing the gospel.

Philip was one such example of this spreading ministry. Acts records that the crowds listened to Philip and witnessed the signs he performed: calling unclean spirits out of those possessed by them and healing many paralyzed and lame people.

Note the result of the working of the Holy Spirit and the good news being spread: “there was great joy in that city” (v.8). Where the gospel is found, great joy can also be found.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**What does this passage teach us about God?**

**What can we learn from the church’s reaction to persecution here?**

**What does this teach us about standing firm in our faith?**

**Where are you facing difficulty now? How might God use this for His purposes in your life and the world?**

When we face difficult circumstances or persecution because of our faith, we should stand firm in the truth, continuing to act as Jesus’s witnesses wherever our path should take us. Believers should expect persecution, and not let it slow us down from walking boldly for Jesus in our lives.



## **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Thank God for the example of bold believers like the ones we've studied today. Pray over any difficulty anyone in your group is currently experiencing. Ask for God's help as you seek to stand firm in your faith in every season and circumstance.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

**August 17, 2025 --- Acts 8:9-25**

## **COMMENTARY**

**Acts 8:1-8**

**8:1** Events surrounding Stephen's testimony and murder led to severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem. All believers except the apostles were scattered to nearby regions. Hence the persecution helped spread the gospel to surrounding areas such as Judea and Samaria. The facts that the apostles were not the focus of the persecution and that it came about after Stephen's death suggest that the persecution focused primarily on Hellenistic Jewish Christians, although the entire church was affected.

**8:2** In the midst of such persecution, it took great courage to bury and mourn over Stephen.

**8:3** Paul, or Saul, seems to have become lead persecutor. His reputation as a destructive force in Jerusalem (ravaging the church), and possibly elsewhere, seems to have preceded him to Damascus (9:13).

**8:4–5** Among those who scattered with the heightened persecution was Philip, who went to a city in Samaria. This territory near Judea was made up of those who had not left under the Assyrian exile and had intermarried with non-Jews. Jews generally looked down on Samaria; ministry here was a significant step for the church, for it indicated that old biases had no place in Christianity. For bias against the Samaritans among Jesus's own disciples, see Luke 9:51–55. For the antagonism between Jews and Samaritans, see Lk 10:29–37; John 4:9.

**8:6–8** The signs that accompanied Philip's message about Jesus, including the casting out of unclean spirits and the healing of many who were paralyzed and lame, ensured that the crowds were all paying attention. God was vouching for Philip's preaching.

