

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

Studies in the Book of Acts “Joy in the City” – Acts 8:1-8

FELLOWSHIP

Samaria was a region born out of confusion. Its origin story was actually due to a warped attempt to deconstruct the religion, ethnicity and culture of the people living there. The Assyrian Empire had conquered the northern tribes of Israel, and as common with their victories, they would relocate and integrate the past conquered nations together. This was to ensure that these groups would lose their sense of identity and any hope for revolting would fade away. The former territory of northern Israel transformed over the generations into a group that had parts of Judaism mixed with the superstitions and practices of the pagan cultures they had been married with. As the Jews of the second temple period were obsessed with racial and religious purity, their Samaritan neighbors to the north were disgusting to them. Viewed as unholy hybrids, even Jesus first told his disciples not to go there. (Matt 10:5-6) This was probably due to the immaturity and prejudice these men still needed to work out, not because Jesus didn't have a heart for the people there. Their religious elitism is exposed in James and John's comments regarding the Samaritans' villages, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" (Luke 9:54) Hardly the good news message that Philip would eventually bring there. Jesus knew that the mission would soon turn to Samaria (Acts 1:8), but only after his disciples were born-again and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A transformation like this would be the only real way to change. Compassion and love would win over the hate they had been raised in. We do get a sneak peak of Jesus and the Gospel in action in Samaria when He meets the woman at the well of Jacob, at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, the religious center for their people. The future potential for reception and belief is recounted in this story, as Jesus offers truth and certainty, something their culture was ripe for. (John 4) In our quest to be missional, we don't have to go very far to find our Samaria. We are surrounded by a displaced culture where pluralism has generationally bred confusion and lost identity. Pray that we are moved by the Gospel to love them and personally introduce Jesus to them.

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together Acts 8:1-8. This chapter brings a major shift in the focus of the church, as persecution plays a part in redirecting their mission and focus. Discuss those areas that can be applied to our lives.

Acts 8:5-6 *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

- There are two interpretations of God's calling in this chapter, one of Saul and one of Philip. *Why are their actions so different? How could this be the same God they both serve? Why would God allow pain and suffering on His church? How do we view God in light of our pain, do we blame Him, or do we see direction from it? When has a life change been hard, but later you realized it was part of God's plan and goodness for you? How can we support each other through life's interruptions?*
- The Gospel must be verbalized, it is the content needed to explain the believer's character. *When have you been approached by someone who noticed a difference in your behavior? How did that become an opportunity for talking about Christ? Usually our own life story or testimony about Jesus is the most personal and legitimizing way to share the Gospel. How has your testimony affected someone else? Why is it a good idea to think through and practice sharing your testimony?*

PRAYER & TESTIMONY

What recent works of Christ could be shared and rejoiced over together this week? Let's also pray and identify where God might be calling us from our own Jerusalem to our Samaria.



Community Group Discussion Guide

Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen's message from January 28, 2018.

Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/the-spirit-the-church-and-the-world/video/joy-in-the-city/>