

“A Moment of Opportunity”

Small Group Discussion

Acts 8:1-4

Begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you all through God's word, and to lead your discussion.

Opening Question (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- This week we're wrapping up our "Interrupted" series. Looking back, have you seen God working in you in any specific way over the last 2 months? Has God been showing you anything, or inviting you to anything specific? Share that with the group.

Context recap:

- Read Acts 1:8.
- Jesus told his first followers, all common people, that they would share the news of his death and resurrection, and that the good news would take root and bring new life in ever-expanding geographic reach. Eventually the whole globe would be covered with people who believe this good news and trust in Jesus.
 - How must this promise have sounded to those first disciples?
 - The promise began to be fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came and filled the believers on the Day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem.
- Read the following verses in Acts. What advances in fulfillment of Jesus' promise do you see here?
 - 2:41, 47.
 - 4:3-4.
 - 5:14.
 - 5:42.
 - 6:5-7. What do you learn about Stephen in this passage?
- How would you describe the morale of the Christ-followers in this city of Jerusalem at this point in time?
- Read Acts 7:54-60.
 - Does anything surprise you about this end to Stephen's life? Why or why not?

Read Acts 8:1-4, then discuss the following.

- What do you think "a great persecution" entails?
- Who all left Jerusalem at this point in time? Who stayed behind?
- Where did the refugees go who left Jerusalem?
- John Stott, in his Commentary on Acts, tells us that the Greek verb translated "destroy," in v. 3, implies that Saul carried out persecution against Christ-followers with "a brutal and sadistic cruelty."
 - Does it surprise you that this same Saul, the torturer, became Paul the evangelist and church-planter? Why or why not?
- In v. 4, the original language for "preached the word," is the word "announced the good news."
 - In what way has the terrible persecution led to the increased fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8?
 - In your own words, summarize what the Holy Spirit did to move the Christ-followers out of Jerusalem and into new regions with the gospel. How do you feel about God's way of working here?

- (Key application) On Sunday, Josh mentioned several possible reasons why we don't often talk about the good news of Jesus with people in our sphere. They are below. Read them, and then discuss the question that follows.
 - The good news has stopped being good news. We've become accustomed to it and lost our sense of wonder.
 - We get so caught up in our other pursuits, that we forget the great mission that Jesus has given us.
 - We're banking on the professional ministers to do the talking.
- Does one of these conditions apply to you specifically? Why?
 - What might it take for these to change?
- In what way has the pandemic (or more recent turmoil) begun to change these? Or if it hasn't yet, how could it change these aspects of your life?
- Have you ever before experienced God using some major interruption to mobilize you or others with the good news? What was that experience like?
- Name some people in your current sphere of influence—neighbors, relatives, friends, co-workers, classmates, teammates, etc.—who need to hear the good news of Jesus. Include them in your prayer time below.

Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you. Spend time praying for one another.
- Pray for the people you named above, to have open hearts to the good news. Pray for the courage and words to engage them in conversation.