

## COVENANT — THE FIRST CHURCH

*Revival in Samaria*

### LESSON 03

JUNE 21, 2026

#### **LESSON TEXT**

Acts 8:1–17

#### **FOCUS VERSES**

Acts 8:15–17

<sup>15</sup>Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

<sup>16</sup>(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

<sup>17</sup>Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

#### **TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT**

God calls His church to be His witnesses to everyone.

#### **MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT**

I will faithfully witness for Jesus even in persecution.

#### **COVENANT CONTEXT**

Up until this point in Israel's long history and the church's short history, God's covenant had been primarily to the Jews. However, once persecution spread the Hebrew Christians out of Jerusalem, God led a Greek-speaking Jew named Philip to the city of Samaria where God invited the Samaritans into covenant with Him through the gospel and the born-again response to the gospel.

#### **TEACHING OUTLINE**

**Icebreaker:** If you could speak any language fluently beside your native language, what would you speak?

**Teacher Tip:** Connect the group's answers to God's deep desire to reach people with the gospel from all cultures and languages.

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection.

##### I. POWERED BY PERSECUTION (I)

- A. Persecution in Jerusalem Led to Great Joy in Samaria
- B. I will not allow persecution to prevent me from sharing the gospel.

***DISCUSS:** If you have ever experienced rejection or opposition as you attempted to spread the gospel, how did you respond?*

##### II. THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT

A. What Was Present

**DISCUSS:** *Why is receiving the Holy Spirit more important than experiencing physical miracles?*

B. One Sign Absent

C. I will witness to others about the necessity of receiving the Spirit.

**DISCUSS:** *What are some ways you can spread the gospel message to your friends, neighbors, and coworkers and talk with them about the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit?*

III. EXTENDING COVENANT

A. Jews and Samaritans

B. Jesus Extended Covenant to the Samaritans (V)

**DISCUSS:** *If you find it difficult to witness to any particular groups of people, how can you overcome this obstacle to be a faithful witness?*

C. I will witness to everyone by excluding no one.

**DISCUSS:** *When you see others the way Jesus sees them, are you more loving and inclusive? If not, how can you be?*

**Internalizing the Message**

**PRAYER FOCUS**

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to give us boldness to witness to everyone
- For God to give us endurance for any persecution that may come our way

**LESSON CONNECTION**

Pastor John knew this hospital visit would not be easy. He stood in front of the receptionist of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and felt himself turning red as he attempted to pronounce the name written on the yellow sticky note in his hand. *I should have Googled how to pronounce this name before I came inside*, he thought to himself. The receptionist looked at him with suspicion and then picked up her desk phone and punched in some numbers. She spoke some Spanish into the phone for a few seconds and then set the phone down.

“Mr. Echevarria said you can head back,” she said, subtly correcting Pastor John’s pitiful pronunciation. “Do you speak Spanish? None of the family speaks English.” Pastor John shook his head no and the receptionist sighed. “I’ll come with you then,” she said.

As the receptionist guided the pastor through a labyrinth of locked doors and white hallways, he reflected on how this visit came about. A missionary he had never met sent him a Facebook message asking him to visit this young couple. Their baby daughter was born prematurely and was struggling for life in the NICU. The mother was a backslidden preacher’s daughter and the father had no background in church. This young family had only recently arrived in the country and the rest of their family was still overseas, so they were alone in the United States with no community and no one to visit with them. Pastor John could not deny that God’s hand had ordained this connection; now He prayed for God’s help to minister to this family. Not only was he unsure of how to comfort the parents of a

struggling infant, he was unsure how to minister to someone who spoke a different language.

Shortly after the receptionist led Pastor John into the room and facilitated the introductions, her pager sounded and she hurried away. The pastor and the family resorted to using translation apps to communicate back and forth. The conversation was slow and cumbersome, but Pastor John could sense this couple was desperate for a miracle for their baby girl. Finally, he boldly asked (with the help of his smartphone), “¿Puedo orar por ella?” (“May I pray for her?”)

With misty eyes, the mother—who undoubtedly remembered her parents preaching about the power of prayer in the overseas church where she grew up—nodded and moved to the incubator and laid her hands over the clear casing. The child’s father and Pastor John joined her and laid their hands on the glass next to the mother’s. Pastor John knew he could not pray in Spanish, but he hoped the sentiments of his simple country English words would translate. As he prayed for the baby’s healing and the family’s salvation, he watched the tears flow from both parents’ eyes. He knew God truly ordained this opportunity to witness to these parents.

## ***BIBLE LESSON***

### **I. POWERED BY PERSECUTION**

The word *power* does not sound like it belongs in the same conversation as persecution. If anything, power evokes thoughts of dominion and conquering. When the disciples were promised power when the Holy Spirit fell upon them, likely few of them imagined the persecution that would fall on them only a few chapters later in the story in Acts. However, the power Jesus promised in Acts 1:8 was not power for dominion, but power to “be witnesses.” The New Testament believers had the power to endure persecution because in doing so, they spread the gospel message around the known world.

**(I)** The persecution of the early church pushed them to evangelize quicker than they may have done otherwise. In the days following the Day of Pentecost, the believers were still largely clustered together in Jerusalem. However, when the murderous Saul began to seek out Christians to martyr them, the new believers scattered from Jerusalem into the surrounding countryside, including the region of Samaria. The promise of Acts 1:8 was already beginning to take shape. The followers of Jesus had witnessed in the city of Jerusalem and the region of Judea, and now they would witness to people who were not fully Jewish in Samaria. The gospel was beginning to reach all nations.

#### **A. Persecution in Jerusalem Led to Great Joy in Samaria**

Enter the story of Philip, a Greek-speaking deacon appointed in Acts 6 to serve tables in Jerusalem. As the Christians spread out from Jerusalem, God used Philip the deacon as an evangelist. He preached to the Samaritans the saving message of Jesus Christ, and the entire city was compelled by his preaching and miracles. The entire city experienced great joy upon experiencing Philip and his ministry.

The progression of the story in Acts 8 is striking. In verse 1, we read of the beginning of persecution and how believers began to scatter. In verse 2, the early Christians buried their friend Stephen after Saul and his colleagues brutally martyred him. In verse 3, the same hateful Saul was actively arresting and imprisoning Christians. For such

a bleak introduction to one chapter, verses 4 through 8 provide a shocking contrast: While the Christians in Jerusalem suffered, the city of Samaria experienced joy.

The writer Luke reflected on these events with inspired understanding. The hardships in Jerusalem prompted the worldwide evangelistic efforts that began in Samaria. But once persecution moved them out of Jerusalem, Philip sought safety in Samaria, and God sought to save the Samaritans. The Christians' persecution led to even greater joy for Samaria. Only God could work all this together for good.

### **B. I will not allow persecution to prevent me from sharing the gospel.**

Although few in North America have experienced the type of violent persecution the believers in Acts 8:1–3 experienced, persecution still occurs in milder forms, such as mockery, slander, and social rejection. For those outside of North America, especially in countries where Christianity is illegal, such violent persecution may still be a daily reality. Regardless of our context, the story of Philip and the other believers in Acts 8 provides an example for us to follow: No matter what persecution or opposition may come our way, we must purpose within ourselves not to allow anything to stop us from spreading the gospel.

***DISCUSS:** If you have ever experienced rejection or opposition as you attempted to spread the gospel, how did you respond?*

## **II. THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT**

The story of the Samaritan revival in Acts 8 also provides an important lesson for followers of Jesus who want to believe and minister as the early church did, for this passage reminds us of the utmost importance of the indwelling Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues.

### **A. What Was Present**

On the surface, it would seem Philip's ministry in Samaria was immediately successful. The crowds "with one accord gave heed" (Acts 8:6) to Philip's preaching; any preacher will tell you this is a great start. In addition God worked miracles for the people of Samaria. Many had demons cast out, and others experienced obvious and undeniable physical healings (Acts 8:7). During the revival, a local sensation known as Simon the Magician believed Philip's words and was baptized (Acts 8:13), which demonstrated to the locals that Jesus had more supernatural power than anything Simon could have conjured up. Many others also obeyed Philip's preaching and submitted to water baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 8:16). According to verse 8, the entire city experienced great joy (mega joy). By the metrics already listed, Philip's ministry in Samaria was a resounding success. But Philip looked over the revival and Samaria with concern. He was not satisfied. Philip knew that until the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit, God's work in Samaria was not finished.

***DISCUSS:** Why is receiving the Holy Spirit more important than experiencing physical miracles?*

### **B. One Sign Absent**

Some have tried to argue that it is possible to receive the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues. Those who make this argument have not studied closely the Samaritan revival in Acts 8. If not tongues, what other sign was absent

that proved to Philip the Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Spirit? The believers in Samaria had heard Philip preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and they responded in faith. They experienced miracles, submitted to baptism in Jesus' name, and even experienced mega joy. Might not all of these be signs of the indwelling Holy Spirit? Philip did not think so. He knew definitively that the Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Spirit despite all of these wonderful supernatural signs. The only way they could have known the Samaritans had not received the Holy Spirit was because they had not heard them speak with other tongues.

Philip was so concerned about the absence of the Spirit outpouring that he reported this to the apostles still dwelling in Jerusalem. Peter and John, upon receiving this word, traveled to Samaria despite the constant threat of persecution. Peter and John knew any risk was worth it to make sure the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

### **C. I will witness to others about the necessity of receiving the Spirit.**

To be truly Apostolic in the sense that we think and minister like the apostles did, we will have the same outlook about Holy Spirit infilling and the supernatural sign of speaking in tongues. We will not be satisfied with anything less than the same experience as the New Testament church. Even if new believers have experienced healing in their bodies and feel great joy and have been baptized in Jesus' name, if they have not yet spoken with tongues as God gives them the ability, God wants to complete their new-birth experience by filling them with the Holy Spirit.

If you have experienced the indwelling Holy Ghost with the sign of speaking in tongues, you can witness boldly to God's changing and lifesaving power to be witnesses unto Him. Allow God's power to flow through you to witness about the absolute necessity and wonder of receiving the Holy Spirit.

***DISCUSS:** What are some ways you can spread the gospel message to your friends, neighbors, and coworkers and talk with them about the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit?*

## **III. EXTENDING COVENANT**

The outpouring of God's Spirit on the Samaritans was yet another sign of God's desire to be in covenant with all of humanity. This new covenant, which Jeremiah prophesied would be written in their hearts, was now being poured out on a notorious foe of the Jews—the Samaritans.

### **A. Jews and Samaritans**

During the era of the New Testament, Jews and Samaritans did not get along with one another. They lived in separate regions with tense and bigoted opinions about each other. The tension dates back to the era of Israel's Divided Kingdom. Second Kings 17:24–29 records how the Assyrian kingdom resettled refugees from several different pagan countries into the region of Samaria. These foreigners began to intermarry with the Israelites and turn their already cold hearts even further from God and toward idols. As time passed, the Samaritans developed their own form of Judaism. One notable difference between their beliefs was the Jews worshiped at the Temple in Jerusalem while the Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim. This difference not only reflected the nuances of their belief systems but also kept the Jews and Samaritans from having to interact with each other.

### **B. Jesus Extended Covenant to the Samaritans**

The Jews viewed the Samaritans as impure half-breeds; the Samaritans viewed the Jews as arrogant elitists. However, Jesus saw both Jews and Samaritans as souls in need of salvation. Jesus showed no partiality. He wanted to offer His new covenant to both of them. While Peter and John journeyed to Samaria after receiving Philip's call for help, it is possible Peter and John reflected on the times Jesus interacted with Samaritans. They may have remembered Jesus requiring them to pass through Samaria. (See John 4:4.) During that brief trip, Jesus ministered to a woman with a scandalous past; in turn, she witnessed to her neighbors, and many came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. (See John 4:39–42.) Perhaps Peter and John wondered with excitement how many of those same individuals would now experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

**(V)** Jesus was completing a work in Acts 8 that He had begun in John 4. Just like Jesus needed to go to Samaria in John 4, the Holy Spirit needed to be poured out in Acts 8. Jesus was extending His covenant promise to the Samaritans just like He had to the Jews.

***DISCUSS:** If you find it difficult to witness to any particular groups of people, how can you overcome this obstacle to be a faithful witness?*

### **C. I will witness to everyone by excluding no one.**

Philip was an appropriate choice for God to send as an evangelist to the Samaritans. In Acts 6, he was one of seven men appointed as deacons to help serve the Greek-speaking community of Jews in Jerusalem. The Greek-speakers had been neglected, and Philip—described as a man of good reputation, “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3)—was chosen to help make sure no bias or bigotry was present as these newly appointed deacons served meals to the widows daily. Philip had a reputation for ministering cross-culturally and making sure no one was excluded. When he became an evangelist to Samaria, Philip's mindset had not changed. Just like he ministered to everyone in Jerusalem, he also spread the gospel to everyone in Samaria.

Just like Philip, we must purpose in our hearts not to exclude anyone as we witness. Every person we interact with is created in God's image, and God deeply wants to be in covenant relationship with that person. This truly means everyone: the people we like and the people we do not like as much, those who speak our language and those who do not, those with different skin tones and cultural norms, and even those whose previous life of sin seems insurmountable. We need to desire to see others as God sees them. Since God loves them and wants to save their souls, we should be willing and eager to witness to them.

***DISCUSS:** When you see others the way Jesus sees them, are you more loving and inclusive? If not, how can you be?*

***Teacher Option:** Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God longs to reach for everyone, despite any cultural or language barriers. The following story may be a continuation of the Lesson Connection or a stand-alone story.*

### **INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

After Pastor John gave the Echevarria family a church card with his cell phone number scribbled on it, he made his way out of the maze of hospital hallways and back to his vehicle. On his drive back to the church, he reflected on all the excuses he could have made not to make that visit. He did not know these people, and he did not speak their language. He was uncomfortable in hospitals and was worried about saying something out of place. However, because he allowed God's Spirit to lead him and did not allow his personal discomfort to get in the way, a divine connection was made.

The pastor quickly went to work preparing the church for this new family's potential visit. He asked around his church and found a lady who knew enough Spanish and was willing to translate. He bought a simple interpretation system with a microphone for the interpreter and headsets for the guests. He prepared his leadership team to be ready to receive this family with warmth and comfort. However, after all his preparation, two months passed and the family had not visited. Pastor John's texts and calls to the family went unanswered. He was disappointed, but he never stopped anticipating and hoping for their visit.

One Sunday, during the preservice prayer, he felt compelled to step outside and pace the covered walkway in front of the church. He remembered the young Spanish-speaking couple and whispered their names in prayer. He reflected on that visit and prayed that something he did or said would stick with them to draw them to the Lord. As he paced in front of the church, he saw an unfamiliar car enter the parking lot. To his welcome surprise, the Echevarrias stepped out of the car. In their arms was a healthy baby girl, fully healed by the power of Jesus' name.

In the following months, this family became faithful members of the church he pastored. God filled the mother with the Holy Ghost, and the father was baptized in Jesus' name and also filled with the Holy Ghost. By the parents' request, Pastor John dedicated their miracle baby girl to the Lord. Every Sunday they walk through the doors of the church, they are a testimony of God's desire to save everyone. They are a living example of what could happen when believers live to share the gospel with everyone, regardless of any perceived barriers that may stand in the way.