Acts 8: Greatness, Comparison & What Matters Most

What's something you've done that you were really proud of? Give everyone a chance to share. It could be something significant or something small. The goal is simply to get the conversation going around achievement, recognition and what makes us feel significant.

LOOK AT THE WORD

Read Acts 8:9-24 together.

Simon was known throughout Samaria as someone great. People gave him their attention and followed him because of what he could do. When Philip arrives and begins pointing people toward Jesus, Simon follows him too. But eventually Simon tries to buy the power of the Holy Spirit.

The contrast is important. Simon had built his identity around being impressive, while Philip was focused on serving others and pointing people toward Jesus. As the message put it, **Simon pointed toward himself, while Philip pointed toward Christ.**

Discuss

1. What stands out to you about Simon in this passage?

2. Why do you think being seen as "great" mattered so much to Simon?

3. What are some ways we can look for significance or validation from other people today?

4. What's the difference between wanting to do something well and needing other people to think you're great?

5. Where do you find yourself most tempted to compare your life, success or faith with someone else's?

FROM GREATNESS TO DISCIPLESHIP

The message contrasts Simon and Philip in a really simple way:

- Simon wanted attention. Philip pointed people to Jesus.
- Simon gathered a crowd. Philip made disciples.
- Simon wanted the stage. Philip was willing to step off the stage.

That raises an important question for all of us: **Are we trying to build an audience or make disciples?**

Jesus didn't call us simply to make converts. He called us to make disciples, and discipleship happens through relationships. Someone who is a little further along in their faith helps someone else take their next step.

Discuss

6. Who has helped you grow in your faith? What did they do that made a difference?

7. Who are you currently helping take a step toward Jesus?

8. What makes discipleship different from simply telling someone what they should believe?

9. What would it look like for your group to become more intentional about helping one another follow Jesus?

ONE CHURCH, ONE SPIRIT

Acts 8 also shows God doing something bigger than individual transformation.

For hundreds of years, there had been hostility between Jews and Samaritans. Yet God intentionally brings these groups together in Acts 8. Peter and John come to Samaria, pray for the new believers and the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

The message points out that this moment wasn't only about the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit. It was also about **Peter and John seeing that God was creating one people — one Spirit, one Lord, one baptism and one church.**

Discuss

10. Why do you think God cared about bringing these two groups together?

11. Where do you see division or “us vs. them” thinking creeping into relationships, churches or culture?

12. What would it look like to pursue unity without pretending our differences don't exist?

13. Is there anyone you find difficult to celebrate, understand or genuinely want good things for? Why?

The message gets especially personal here, challenging us to examine comparison, bitterness and envy. The speaker talks about wanting to be able to celebrate other people's victories rather than missing what God is doing because we're focused on someone else's success.

14. What makes it difficult to celebrate when someone else gets what you wanted?

15. How can remembering that God isn't running out of good things change the way we respond to someone else's success?

DON'T FORGET WHAT MATTERS MOST

The message eventually zooms out from Acts 8 to Revelation 5, giving us a picture of where the story is ultimately headed.

John sees heaven filled with worship. Every creature is declaring the worth of Jesus, the Lamb who was slain.

The point isn't simply that heaven will be incredible. It's that **Jesus is ultimately the center of everything.**

The message calls our tendency to lose sight of that **“eternity amnesia”** — forgetting what is eternal, what matters most and what our lives are ultimately moving toward.

Discuss

16. What tends to make you forget what matters most?

17. What things are easy to make the center of your life that were never meant to be there?

18. How does keeping eternity in view change the way we think about success, relationships, work or recognition?

19. What would change in your life if Jesus became more central and your own significance became less important?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

This week, consider these three questions:

Who am I trying to impress?
Where am I looking for validation, recognition or significance?

Who am I helping follow Jesus?
Who is one person I can intentionally encourage, invest in or help take a next step?

What am I forgetting?
What has become so important in my everyday life that I've lost sight of Jesus and what matters eternally?

One Next Step

Choose one person to encourage this week.

It could be someone who is struggling, someone who needs a reminder of God's goodness or someone whose success you've struggled to celebrate. Look for an opportunity to point them toward Jesus rather than toward yourself.

PRAY TOGETHER

Take a few minutes to pray around these themes:

- Ask God to reveal where comparison, pride or the need for recognition has taken root.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to form humility and generosity in us.
- Pray for the people God has placed around us who we can disciple and encourage.
- Pray for greater unity in the church.
- Ask God to help us remember what is eternal and keep Jesus at the center.

If appropriate for your group, you could close by taking communion together. The message connected communion directly to the danger of “eternity amnesia” — Jesus gives us the meal as a tangible way to remember Him and what matters most.