

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share with one another what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM ACTS 8:1 to 11:18.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps. Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you. Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages. Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself, for in your family, for someone nearby and for someone far away.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM ACTS 8:1 to 11:18.**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Acts 8:1 – 11:18. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 8.

I want to share from Acts chapter 8:1-4 about the first persecution against the Christian church. This passage speaks of a great persecution that broke out against the Christians in Jerusalem. After Stephen had given a great testimony to the Jews about God's work in their history and how the Jews had nevertheless hardened their hearts against God, these Jews were furious. They dragged Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. This was the beginning of *the first persecution against the Christian church in the history of the world!* One important leader of this persecution was Saul, who was later called the apostle Paul. Saul was a Pharisee, very learned and very zealous to keep the law. He most probably heard the courageous testimony of Stephen and was present at the stoning of Stephen. Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women, who were believers in Christ, and put them in prison. What did these Christians feel and think? Maybe they remembered the words that Jesus spoke during the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12). Nevertheless, many Christians fled and scattered in all directions. In verse 4 we read, "Those who had been scattered, preached the word wherever they went." Nobody can stop the sovereign God of the Bible to accomplish his plan of salvation in this world! Nobody can stop the preaching of the good news in the Bible! The Jews thought that they could stop the spread of the gospel by persecuting the Christians. *But God turned this persecution against Christians into an opportunity to spread the gospel far and wide!* Wherever these Christians went, they preached the gospel and as we see, many people believed and became Christians too! This passage encourages me not to be discouraged when we Christians get persecuted, but to believe that God will likewise turn the persecution against us into opportunities to spread the gospel to other places!

(S) I want to share from Acts 8 about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Why do these Samaritans first hear the gospel and believe and only later receive the Holy Spirit? Does this passage in the Bible teach us that Christians today should likewise first hear the gospel and believe and should only at some time after they have become believers in Christ be baptised with the Holy Spirit?

This is an important question, because Acts chapter 8 is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Acts chapter 8 is a very special event in history and is not an example for the later Christian church. Acts chapter 8 relates what happened in Christian history and it is not a teaching what should happen in the salvation history of all Christians. There are three distinct groups of people in the Bible: the Jews, the half-Jews who were called Samaritans and the non-Jews who were also called Greeks or Gentiles. The Samaritans were a mixed race, consisting of Jews from the old northern kingdom of Israel and other races of people, who were imported by the Assyrian empire 750 years before. In Acts 1:8, Jesus clearly commanded his apostles to be his witnesses to these three distinct groups of people. They had to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea of the Jews, in Samaria of the Samaritans and to the ends of the earth where all the non-Jewish nations lived. Jesus Christ commanded that the good news about his death and resurrection and salvation should be preached to all the people in the world, regardless of their race, culture or religion. In Acts chapter 2, the first believers from among the Jews were

baptised with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5; 11:15-16). In Acts chapter 8, the first believers among the half-Jews or Samaritans were baptised with the Holy Spirit. And in Acts chapter 10 and 11, the first believers from among the non-Jews or Gentiles were baptised with the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts thus clearly show that the gospel was not just good news for Jews, who believe, but also good news for half-Jews and non-Jews, who believe! The gospel message about Jesus Christ is for every nation in the world! Every person in the world, who believed in Jesus Christ and received him into his or her heart and life, would be saved!

(T) But why were the Samaritans only baptised with the Holy Spirit some time after they believed?

(S) There is a very good reason why the Samaritans were only baptised with the Holy Spirit some time after they believed in Jesus Christ. In verse 5-8 we read that the Samaritans saw the miracles, which Philip did, and they paid close attention to what he said. In verse 12 we read that the Samaritans believed and were even baptised with water. But although the Samaritans believed the message, they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Verse 14 -18 explains that when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted the gospel, they sent the apostles Peter and John to them to pray for them so that the Samaritans too may receive the Holy Spirit. Why did the Samaritans not receive the Holy Spirit the moment they believed and why was it necessary to send the apostles to the Samaritans so that they might receive the Holy Spirit?

The answer is in the teaching of Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18. When Jesus Christ was still on earth, he made his apostles the foundation of the historical Christian church! In Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18 he says to his apostles, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" Hereby, Jesus Christ gave to his apostles the authority to include or to exclude people from the kingdom and from the Church! *Jesus Christ decided to use his apostles to build the first historical churches in the world among the Jews, among the half-Jews or Samaritans and among the non-Jews or Gentiles.* Only by the key or authority of the apostles could the first believers from among the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles enter God's kingdom and enter the Christian Church. Not the prophets of the Old Testament, but the apostles of Jesus Christ in the New Testament were the founders of the historical Christian churches among these three major divisions of people in the world. Without the apostles of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church could not be founded. And the Christian Church is the community of people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (cf. Ephesians 2:22).

Thus, in Acts chapter 2, the apostles of Jesus Christ founded the first historical Christian church among the Jews. In Acts chapter 8, the apostles of Jesus Christ founded the first historical Christian church among the half-Jews or Samaritans. And in Acts chapter 10-11, the apostles of Jesus Christ founded the first historical Christian church among the non-Jews or Gentiles. After the historical founding of the Christian church among the three major groups of people in the world, 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 1:13 clearly teach us that people always receive the Holy Spirit at the same moment they believe in Jesus Christ. The moment people believe in Jesus Christ they are baptised with the Holy Spirit.

(T) I want to share from Acts 8:28-35 about a method for evangelism. An angel guided the evangelist Philip to a man reading the Bible. He went and sat next to this man and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The man replied, "How can I understand it, unless someone explains it to me?" Then in verse 35 we read, "Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." For me this is a very important way of preaching the gospel. First. I give a New Testament or Bible to people who want to read it. Second. When I meet with a non-Christian, I read the Bible together with him and answer his questions about the contents. In this way, the non-Christian discovers for himself the truths in the Bible.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 9.

(S) I want to share about Paul's conversion. At this time the apostle Paul was still called Saul. He thought that his mission in life was to persecute the Christians. Verse 1 says that he "breathed murderous threats against the disciples" and this means that he not only threw them into prison, but also sometimes caused them to be killed. One day he travelled to Damascus in Syria in order to arrest Christians there and take them as prisoners back to Jerusalem. He was a real fanatic persecutor of Christians. However, on the way, Jesus Christ himself appeared to Saul. A bright light surrounded Jesus. Jesus said, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" All persecution against Christians is in reality a persecution against Jesus Christ! The persecutors of Christians are warned, because Jesus Christ is a formidable opponent! Saul went to the house of a Christian, called Ananias. Jesus Christ had said to Ananias that Saul was his chosen instrument to bring the gospel to the non-Jews (Gentiles) and even to their kings. Jesus Christ had chosen one of his greatest enemies to become one of his greatest friends and co-workers! This is very encouraging to me. Therefore I want to *pray for those people who persecute Christians, because Christ may turn some of them to become great Christians just like the apostle Paul!* In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you." Listener, let us pray for the people who persecute us Christians.

(T) I want to share about the way Paul preached the gospel. After his conversion, Paul went to the synagogues where the Jews met for worship. Here he began to preach that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Messiah. As the Son of God, Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). He is the

visible radiance of God's glorious character and the exact representation of God's being (Hebrews 1:3). As the Messiah, Jesus is the long expected Saviour from sin and God's judgement. Paul knew the Bible very well and he used it to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. Nobody could prove him wrong and he baffled the Jews with his powerful arguments (verse 22). People could not stand up against the wisdom of Spirit by whom Paul spoke (Acts 6:10). In verse 28-29 we read that Paul spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he debated with the Jews about Christ. Like Paul, I too want to be bold when I witness for Jesus Christ and use my Bible to prove to people that Jesus is the Saviour of the world.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 10.

(S) I want to share about the importance of going out to do missionary work. Until this time, the gospel was only preached to the Jews and the Samaritans, who were half Jewish. The preachers did not go to the non-Jews or Gentiles, but only went to the Jewish synagogues to preach the gospel. But Jesus Christ had commanded his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptise them ... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." A few years had passed and the disciples still did not go to the nations of the world! Therefore God moved both the Gentiles towards the Christians and he moved the Christians towards the Gentiles! Just look at how great an effort he made to bring the Christians to the Gentile nations of the world! First. God appeared in a vision to the Gentile army officer, called Cornelius. God told him to send messengers to fetch the apostle Peter and listen to what he has to say. In the mean time God also appeared in a vision to the apostle Peter. It was a very strange vision. A sheet came down from heaven filled with all kinds of unclean animals for a Jew and God ordered him to eat from these animals. Peter refused three times and every time God said to him, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Soon afterwards, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at Peter's house and invited him to come and speak at Cornelius' house. Only then Peter understood the vision God had given him. Although the Jewish law forbade a Jew to associate with a Gentile or even visit him, God had shown Peter that the law had been cancelled and that he should no longer regard the Gentiles as "unclean"! Second. Peter and some Jewish brothers were obedient. They went with the messengers and found Cornelius' house filled with his relatives and close friends. Peter preached the gospel to them and they believed in Jesus Christ and received the Holy Spirit in their hearts! This chapter is important to me, because it shows that God wants the gospel to be preached everywhere in the world. It also shows that God can overcome all our prejudices against other nationalities and give us a fruitful ministry among them!

(T) I want to share about the importance of a house, relatives and friends with regard to evangelism. First. In verse 24 we read, "Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends." And in verse 27, "Peter found a large gathering of people" in the house. It is important that we Christians use our house to preach the gospel to other people. Most people feel more comfortable in a house than in a special church building. Cornelius invited his relatives and close friends to his house as well as the speaker Peter. He wanted to give all his relatives and close friends an opportunity to hear the gospel. I have made a commitment to God that my house also belongs to him and that he may use it as he pleases. I have opened my house for Christian meetings. Second. I invite my relatives and close friends to these meetings, because I want them to hear the good news and believe as well.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 11.

(S) I have a question about the Holy Spirit from Acts 11:16. What is the real meaning of "baptism with the Holy Spirit"?

(T) Let us read verse 14 - 18 carefully. First. We read in verse 14 that the apostle Peter went to the household of Cornelius and preached a message through which they would be saved. Peter preached the gospel to them and they listened attentively. Second. We read in verse 17 that they believed the gospel message. Third. We read in verse 16 that they were "baptised with the Holy Spirit". Verse 15 explains that the Holy Spirit came on them. And verse 17 explains that they received the gift, namely the Holy Spirit himself who came to live in their hearts. Fourth. We read in verse 18 that the result was that God gave them "repentance unto life", meaning that they converted to Christ and received eternal life. Verse 14 describes the result as "being saved". As a summary, "the baptism with the Holy Spirit" is a term explaining "rebirth" or "salvation", which is a work of the Holy Spirit. It does not describe another event different from salvation.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide Acts 11:19 – 14:28 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio from SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".