

## 10. Simon the Sorcerer

Acts 8:9-25

At the time when the church was first spreading in the midst of persecution, there was a man named Simon, who had practiced magic in the city of Samaria and amazed the people, boasting that he himself was somebody great. The people believed him and thought he had the power of God because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. When he saw the signs and great miracles being performed, he was amazed.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. They came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part in this ministry because your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord. Maybe he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me."

Now when they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

**INTRODUCTION:** (Ask a pre-story question to discuss in pairs or as a group.)

- **Have you ever seen or heard of a magician/sorcerer/witchcraft? What did you think about it? What does the culture think about it and how does it have power?**

**THE STORY:** Tell the story and learn it together as a group through many repetitions.

**POST-STORY DISCUSSION: Lead a discussion guided by these questions:**

**OUTLINE VERSION (for teacher to use when teaching)**

**Details: What happened? To see what truths we can learn.**

- **What do we know about Simon? What was he like? What did other people think of him? What can we learn from this?**
- **What happened when Philip came? How did the people respond? Why was this significant?**
- **Why was it important to talk about the kingdom of God?**
- **How did Simon respond? What was he especially interested in?**
- **How did the apostles respond to the news of the Samaritans receiving the Word of God? What did Peter and John do for them?**
- **Why was the Spirit withheld from them at first?**

**SIMON:**

- **What did Simon do when he saw the Holy Spirit fill believers when Peter and John laid hands on them? How did the apostles respond? What was wrong with his request? What did it reveal about Simon's heart?**
- **Was Simon saved? Did Peter need to know for sure? Why not?**
- **How is it possible that Simon believed, was baptized, stayed with the apostles, and saw miracles and was not really saved?**
- **Was Simon really a prophet? Did he really possess the “power of God” as the people had thought?**
- **Peter's response to Simon may seem a bit harsh. But how was Peter protecting the church?**

**Summary: What do we learn here from the early church? What commandments or examples to follow (act, speak, believe) are found in this story? Which ones still apply to us today?**

- **Repent, even of our intentions.**
- **Baptize. Be baptized**
- **Preach the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus for all people.**
- **Trust the power of God. Don't depend on other powers.**
- **Don't try to “buy” (manipulate) power or positions or other gifts of God.**
- **Do not seek spiritual power in order to promote ourselves or our own agendas.**

- **Rebuke sin** - with love and with truth.
- **Don't assume everyone in church is saved.**

**General Application:** (discuss with whole group)

- **What things in life do we try to “buy” (or earn by our actions) sometimes because our faith is out of order?**
  - Try to “buy” reputation, authority, respect, position, power, control, comfort, opportunity
  - May try to “buy” these things through my wealth or my education, or through being the hard worker to promote myself - trying make people depend on me, showing more respect or favoritism to powerful people
- **How do pastors and church leaders sometimes put their hope more in the gifts of God than in the Giver, God himself? Are there times in which people want things from God but do not pursue a real relationship with him? How does this story help us to see things more clearly?**

**Personal Application:**

- **What is one way that you these days that you are focused more on pursuing one of God's gifts than pursuing God himself, the Giver of all good gifts? How does this story help you to see the truth of the Gospel more clearly?**