



The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

ACTS 8:1-8

"THE SCATTERING"

OCTOBER 1, 2023

AT A GLANCE

Followers of Jesus are never scattered; they are sown intentionally.

CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the Church. In the previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the Church) have become where heaven and earth meet. The Church is multiplying rapidly, and with it, opposition from the outside and obstacles from within. Despite the opposition, the apostles resolved to continue preaching about new life in Jesus and radically meeting people's needs wherever God sends them.

Last week, we explored Stephen's brutal execution at the hands of Saul. This week, we look at the early Church's response to the growing and intensely violent persecution aimed at stopping the spread of the Church.

SERMON SUMMARY

Pastor Joey preached this week that Christians are never scattered; they are always sown. God plants us, despite our seemingly chaotic & earthly circumstances, with the loving hand of an intentional farmer to fulfill a specific purpose.

But as we examine the systematic and severe persecution of the early Church, we are tempted to believe the opposite. It appears the Church was scattered randomly and in danger of being snuffed out. But as we'll see, Christ's Church can not be snuffed out, and instead, these circumstances are redeemed by God. He is intentionally planting his people in new places where there is a need for the Good News to be preached.

As we examine our own circumstances and opposition to the Christian life, we must challenge ourselves to view these as the early Christians did, as an intentional partnership with God to fulfill our primary calling as "new spreaders" wherever God plants us.



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This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.

DISCUSSION

Expand Our Awareness

When obstacles to our lives arise, they tend to "scatter" us in directions different from what we expected. But Pastor Joey said how we interpret the word "scatter" has massive implications on our faith, our mindset, and our response to our circumstances.

He explained two definitions of the word scatter can better be described like this:

- Scattered:** Groups of people that separate and move off quickly in different directions.
- Sown:** A purposeful and intentional planting in a particular place to produce a specific outcome.

One stereotypically sprouts from a fear response that interprets opposition through the lens of a victim. Despite opposition, the other sprouts from seeing itself as an active partner in a larger design.

- How might viewing life circumstances with a "scattering" perspective impact your mindset, emotions, and behavior?
- How might viewing life circumstances with a "sowing" perspective impact your mindset, emotions, and behavior/ ?
- How does moving from a victim mindset to a partner-with-God mindset change how you live?

Extract the Truth

Read Acts 8:1-8

Based on the reading of the text, how did this intense persecution impact the early Christians?

Lament is a necessary response to living in a fallen world.

- How do you think pausing to lament Stephen's death together helped them rebound their sense of purpose?
- What do you believe allowed them to continue despite experiencing traumatic, violent opposition?



ACTS 8:1-8

Explore Your Experience

We all face obstacles and resistance to living out our faith: some large and some small. Nonetheless, we encounter barriers that impact our daily lives.

- What is an obstacle you are currently facing? How is it impacting YOUR mindset, emotions, and behaviors?
- What do you need to lament about that situation that would help you rebound your sense of purpose?
- How would your experience change if you saw yourself as a partner with God in the face of opposition, not a victim of events that thwart your plans?

Experience Transformation & Engage the World

Pastor Joey said that to make this change, we need to do the following:

Perspective: Change our perspective of opposition from scattering to sowing.

Observe: Identify where God has sown you and see the people in our spheres with the eyes of Christ.

Purpose: Joyfully recommit to our primary purpose of sharing the Good News of Jesus in love.

Equip: Equipping ourselves to accomplish that purpose and learning how to practically and genuinely share.

Act: Take action in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we can move through that progression, we will see the Church grow like a weed in the face of opposition.

- Which one of these growth steps jumps out to you the most and why?
- What is one thing you can do to pursue growth in that area?
- Who is one person in your sphere you can move towards in love and power of the Holy Spirit this week?

Pray For:

Perspective: Change our perspective of opposition from scattering to sowing.

Observe: Identify where God has sown you, and seeing the people in our spheres with the eyes of Christ.

Purpose: Joyfully recommit to our primary purpose, sharing the Good News of Jesus in love.

Equip: Equipping ourselves to accomplish that purpose, and learning how to practically and genuinely share.

Action: Take action in the power of the Holy Spirit.



**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Read Acts 8:9-25