

## LIFE GROUP GUIDE

### VENTURE CHURCH

REACH

THE SAMARITAN BELIEVERS RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS 8:14-17

10/08/2017



### MAIN POINT

The Holy Spirit is necessary for Christ followers and is given to all who believe.

### GETTING STARTED

Our sermon on Sunday discussed Acts 8:4-25. Our Life Group study will focus on verses 14-17, when Peter and John visited Samaria and the believers received the Holy Spirit.

What are some highlights you remember from Sunday's sermon?

### DIGGING DEEPER

**READ ACTS 8:14.**

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Who were the Samaritans? How did the gospel first get to Samaria (see Acts 8:1)?

How was the gospel's spread to Samaria an example of something that might have been difficult for Jewish believers?

**READ ACTS 8:15-16.**

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Why do you think that the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria?

What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?

**NOTE: Venture will have a baptism service on October 15. Let Rob or Mark know if you'd like to**

***be baptized!***

**READ ACTS 8:17.**

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**What are some ways the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christ followers?**

**How does this passage emphasize the importance of prayer?**

**Why do you think the Holy Spirit chose to wait until Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans?**

### **LIVING IT OUT**

**Normally, we receive the Holy Spirit when we trust Christ, not at a later time. Acts 8 is an exception because it was the first time the gospel was received in Samaria.**

**How can this passage make us more grateful for the work of the Holy Spirit?**

**How does this passage encourage us to share the gospel with others?**

**How can this passage motivate us to pray?**

### **PRAY**

Share needs and pray for each other.

Pray for the Hovivians and their ministry in Ireland.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **ACTS 8:14-17**

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8:14-17 The focus shifted from Philip and even Simon, for the moment, and centered on Peter and John, who had been sent by the Jerusalem apostles upon hearing of the Samaritan reception of the gospel (v. 14). This action could be interpreted as somewhat presumptuous, the mother church checking out this upstart mission. The drift of the text, however, indicates quite the opposite. Peter and John came more as participants, offering the endorsement and support of the apostles in this new missionary enterprise. That the Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Spirit (v. 16) is certainly not the usual pattern of Acts. Normally the receipt of the Spirit was closely joined to baptism as part of the normative experience of conversion and commitment to Christ (cf. 2:38). This is certainly the case with Paul's conversion, where healing, receipt of the Spirit, and baptism are closely joined together (9:17-18). This was the case also with

Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles who received the Spirit first and then were immediately baptized (10:44-48).

The closest parallel to the experience of the Samaritans is that of the disciples of John in Ephesus, who were first baptized and then received the Spirit when Paul laid his hands upon them (19:5-6). Obviously Acts presents no set pattern. The Spirit is connected with becoming a Christian. Sometimes the Spirit is connected with the laying on of hands, sometimes not. Sometimes coming of the Spirit precedes baptism. Sometimes it follows. The Spirit “blows where it wills” (John 3:8); the Spirit cannot be tied down to any manipulative human schema.

The current passage is the most difficult case of them all. Why was the receipt of the Spirit so disconnected from the Samaritans’ baptism? Luke indicated that such a separation was not normal by the little word “simply” in v. 16. They had “simply been baptized”—one would usually have expected them to have received the Spirit as well. Many interpreters point to the significance of the experience being one of an outward demonstration of the Spirit in some visible sign that Simon could “see” (v. 18). Therefore this does not rule out the Spirit’s having worked inwardly in them at the point of their initial conviction and commitment.<sup>110</sup> Interpreters also have noted that it was not an individual as much as a community experience when the Spirit fell on them in an outward demonstration of power, much as it had at Pentecost (2:3-4) and much as it would later with Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles (10:44). It is not without justification that many refer to this as the “Samaritan Pentecost.”<sup>111</sup> It is a major stage of salvation history. The Spirit as it were indicated in a visible manifestation the divine approval of this new missionary step beyond Judaism.

There is further significance to the Samaritan experience occurring in two stages. Through Peter and John’s participation, the Samaritan mission was given the stamp of approval of the mother church in Jerusalem. It was not just the undertaking of a maverick Hellenist missionary. It was endorsed, received, and enthusiastically participated in by the whole church. But is there any significance in the fact that the Spirit was received through the apostles laying their hands on the Samaritans? Some would see this as an indication of a rite of “confirmation” separate from and subsequent to baptism.<sup>112</sup> Again the evidence of Acts will not bear this reading of the practice of a later age back into the New Testament text.<sup>113</sup> Peter and John’s laying on of their hands is best seen as a gesture of the apostolic solidarity and fellowship with the Samaritans.<sup>114</sup> The receipt of the Spirit is above all God’s answer to their prayer (v. 15).