

## Aim of lesson

To contrast the real power of the gospel preached by Philip in Samaria with 'phoney' power, such as that used by Simon the sorcerer to fool people.

## Bible background

Acts 8:4-25.

## Outline of lesson

### Remember the seven deacons?

Ask the class if they can remember any of the seven deacons who were appointed to help with the distribution of food in Acts 6. Can they remember what happened to any of them? In this way remind the class of Stephen and his death, and the persecution and scattering that happened at his death.

### Philip

Read together Acts 8:1-14 to see what happened to another of the seven. Discuss v14. It is possible that Philip sent a message to the apostles to let them know about the preaching in Samaria and the great response with which it had been met. Discuss with the class what Philip might have written, and have the class complete the first part of the worksheet with their ideas.

### Passing on the spirit gifts?

Read together Acts 8:14-17 and discuss the way the disciples received the Holy Spirit. The new disciples would now have some of the gifts that the apostles had received at Pentecost. Some would be able to heal or speak in other languages. It would seem from this that only the apostles could pass on the gift. Philip had not passed on any gifts, and was not approached by Simon (v18).

Read v18-25 and discuss Simon's attitude. He was impressed by what he knew was real power, not just the tricks by which he had fooled the people previously, but he was still interested in having power which would make him admired by others, perhaps bringing him fame and fortune. He did not recognise the real power of the gospel, a power which changes people, which gives life and certainty instead of death and despair.

### And afterwards ...

Get the class to complete the middle section of the worksheet. The three figures are Peter, John and Philip at the end of the visit. Help the students to write what they might have said before Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. One of them could say a prayer which could include praying for Simon.

### What about us?

Discuss other 'magicians', 'astrologers', etc. who claim to have special powers today. Show how foolish and dangerous it is to be deceived by such things. They are all invented and planned to manipulate others, and generally to make money and achieve fame. You may like to read God's assessment of them in Deuteronomy 18:9-12. Help the class note the phoney 'powers' of horoscopes and fortune tellers etc. and the real power of the gospel to change lives, in the two boxes on the worksheet. Point out to the class the message of Acts 8:8. It is the real power of God's message to us which brings joy – great joy.

## Digging deeper

### Help for the early church

This is an exercise to discover how the holy spirit helped the early church.

## Relevance to our lives

You could ask the class this week to pray that they might know the real power of the gospel in their lives, so that they might have great joy.

## Prayer

The class could write a prayer they think Peter and John might have prayed about Simon.

## Other suggestions for activities

- The class could divide the narrative into scenes and each draw one. This could form a display with captions explaining what is happening in each.
- The class could write the report they think Peter and John might have made to the rest of the apostles when they returned to Jerusalem.