

INTRODUCTION

Acts 8:1-4 captures a pivotal and painful moment in the early church. Just before this passage, Stephen – a man full of faith, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit – was put to death for boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ. His message confronted those who claimed to respect Scripture but rejected the Savior it pointed to. Instead of responding with repentance, the people responded with resistance, and a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. As a result, believers were forced to leave their homes and scatter throughout Judea and Samaria.

At first glance, this moment feels like a setback. The church is under attack, relationships are disrupted, and believers are displaced from the place they once called home. However, Scripture gives us a different perspective. The scattering of the church was not random; it was purposeful. While the enemy intended to destroy the church, God was strategically dispersing His people to expand the reach of the gospel. What looked like displacement was actually deployment.

This passage challenges how we interpret the difficult seasons in our own lives. Seasons of discomfort, separation, and unexpected change can feel like loss, but they may actually be God's way of repositioning us for purpose. In those moments, it's easy to assume that something has gone wrong, but what if God is using those very disruptions to move us into something greater?

Growth often requires movement, and movement often requires change. The challenge for us is not simply to endure difficult seasons, but to interpret them correctly. This passage shows us that those who were scattered did not retreat. They went about preaching the word. We must ask ourselves this question: will we allow hardship to silence us, or will we see it as an opportunity to live out and share our faith right where God has sent us?

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you tend to feel more comfortable staying in familiar environments, or are you someone who enjoys new spaces and change? Why?
2. What's one way you've seen God show up in an unexpected place or moment recently?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. Have you ever experienced a situation that felt like a setback at first, but later realized God was using it for something greater? What did that teach you?
2. The early church's faith didn't stop when they left Jerusalem. What does it look like for you to live out your faith beyond the church walls?

3. This Sunday, we literally gathered in homes across the metroplex. How does this setting challenge or reshape your understanding of what “church” is?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What is one specific way you can intentionally represent Christ in your everyday environment this week (home, work, school, etc.)?
2. As you close out this time, pray and ask God to open your eyes to the people and places He has already assigned to you, and to help you live as a carrier of His Kingdom wherever you go.
3. ***Want to dig deeper?*** Take a look at the following passages: Acts 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Matthew 13:3-4; Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 29:11; John 10:10; Genesis 50:20; Isaiah 54:17.

RENEW YOUR MIND

“And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” - Acts 8:1