

How Much For A Bike Ride?

What's It All About?

"Man! Come on. Get your bike!" Seth heard Carter yelling as he and Lucas rode up. "We're going on the bike trail."

"Coming," Seth yelled back. He loved trail riding, and he had just gotten a new dirt bike for his birthday. It was a perfect night to ride the trail, too. It wasn't too hot or cold. Seth jumped on his bike and headed down the driveway. Then he remembered. "Hold up. I can't go. Tonight is church."

"Church?" Carter grinned and rolled his eyes. He and Lucas laughed.

"Wait. Why don't you guys come with us? Then we can ride later," Seth suggested. He knew what the answer

would probably be. He had invited them to come before. Each time they had mocked him and questioned why he even went to church. Still, Seth asked. He knew that the Bible teaches he should never stop trying. "I am thinking no," Carter said.

"No way," agreed Lucas.

The boys turned to leave. They were still laughing as they rode away toward the park.

How did Seth stand up for his belief in God? Why do you think Carter and Lucas were hesitant to go to church and mocked Seth for going? How should you respond when someone mocks you—or even tries to harm you—because of your faith?



Learning From God

Acts 7:51–8:1a, NIV—"You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it." 54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." **57** At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

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8:1 And Saul approved of their killing him.

The leaders charged Stephen with blasphemy and stoned him to death. Blasphemy means to speak against something in a disrespectful way. Stephen was accused of speaking against the Temple. Though Stephen did no wrong, his words of truth led to his death. While you may not be stoned or killed for speaking the truth about God, you may face anger and resistance. Do not let that sway you; stand firm in your faith.

What I Have Learned

Are the following true or false?

Stephen said that the Jewish 1. leaders resisted the Holy Spirit. Stephen said that the leaders 2. had killed lesus. The leaders agreed with 3. Stephen and released him. Stephen was charged 4. with theft. Stephen looked up and saw 5. Abraham standing at the right hand of God. 6. The leaders took Stephen out of the city and stoned him. Stephen asked God to 7. forgive them. 8. Stephen survived.

Keep In Mind

"While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'" (Acts 7:59, NIV).

Choosing What's Best

Think about the sacrifice Stephen made in today's lesson. Then read the list below of things you might have to sacrifice by standing up for your belief in God. Rate the things on the list from 1–5. 1 is the hardest to give up, 5 is the easiest.

____ Invitations to parties

_____ Friends

_____ Acceptance into the lunch group at school

_____ Being picked to play on teams

_____ Being included in conversations on the bus

Doing My Part

Your challenge this week is to be a peaceful and bold witness for Christ regardless of the cost. Remember, you can ask the Holy Spirit to help you, and God will surely be pleased. 

Using God

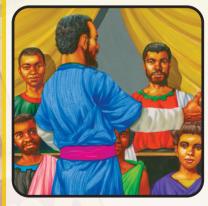
What's It All About?

Manuel was shocked when Jake slid next to him in the pew. "What's up?" he whispered. "When did you start coming to church? I didn't think your family was into that."

Jake laughed. "We're not, really, but our family just opened a new lawn business. Dad said God would bless the business if we started going to church, and boy, do we need a money blessing! Besides, church might be a good place to get some new clients."

"That's funny," Manuel said. "My dad says just the opposite. He loves God more than his business. He believes that if he follows God's teaching, everything

will be fine. So we come to church because we love God and want to spend time in His house." What motivated Manuel's and Jake's dads to attend church? Which one's motivation pleases God? Why? How might people try to use God to get power, money, or prestige? What would you say to such people?



Learning From God

Simon was a sorcerer. For years, he performed magic and amazed the crowds. People even said his magic must be from God. When Philip came to preach the Good News of the Gospel, many people believed, including Simon. He followed Philip and was amazed that at Philip's touch, people received the Holy Spirit. Simon wanted the same power, so he offered to pay for it.

Acts 8:9–24, NIV—Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God."

11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. 12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. 14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are

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full of bitterness and captive to sin." **24** Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

Peter boldly called Simon to repentance. He explained that money could not buy the gifts of God. Even asking for such a thing showed that Simon's heart was sinful. He wanted power for the wrong reasons, and God considered his sinful heart wicked. Simon understood. He asked Peter to pray for him.

What I Have Learned

What happened first? Number the events in the correct order.



Peter stated that the Holy Spirit cannot be bought.

Peter and John prayed for the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.

Philip proclaimed the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.

Simon asked for Peter's help in repentance.

Simon also believed, was baptized, and followed Philip.

Many people believed in Christ.

Peter told Simon to repent of sin and that God would forgive him.

Simon offered to pay for the ability to give others the Holy Spirit.

Simon amazed people with magic and sorcery.

Simon's actions showed his heart was sinful.

Keep In Mind

"When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18, NIV).

Choosing What's Best

Why should people follow Christ? Create a list of reasons below.

Doing My Part

Your challenge this week is to be an observer. Find two examples of ways people use money or influence in the wrong way and two examples of people who use money or influence in a godly way. Be ready to report your findings next week.



Hey, That's My Seat!

What's It All About?

A new family moved into the empty house on Amanda's block. Though there were children in the family, no one wanted to play with them. They had just arrived from another country and they spoke English in a funny way. Amanda wasted no time telling jokes at their expense.

That next Sunday, Amanda overslept and was late getting to her Juniorway class. When she opened the door, she was shocked at what she saw. There in the middle of the class was a young girl from that family.

Not only was she in her class, she was sitting in her seat!

"Amanda," the teacher said, since the shocked girl just stood there in the doorway, "I want you to meet Maria. She just moved into our neighborhood and will be coming here to church. Isn't that wonderful?" The teacher looked at her with a big smile on her face.

How do you think Amanda felt about Maria being there? Do you think she agreed with her teacher that it was wonderful? Do you think Amanda will welcome her? Why do you think people are sometimes unwilling to befriend those who are different from them? How do you think Maria felt about all of this?



Learning From God

What is our responsibility toward diversity, those who are of a different race, culture, or group? In today's lesson, the Apostle Philip was told by an angel to go into the desert where he met an important man from the African nation of Ethiopia. They were from different lands, but something brought them together. The man was reading Scripture but was having trouble understanding it. Philip offered to help him understand what he was reading.

Acts 8:26–39, NIV—Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official

in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." **30** Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. **31** "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." **34** The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" **35** Then Philip began with that

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very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. **36** As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" **37** Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

The Ethiopian wanted to be baptized. He wanted to let everyone know that he was now a believer in Christ. What may have happened had Philip not been open to helping him?

What I Have Learned

Circle the correct answer.

1. The Apostle Philip was sent on his trip to the desert by:

(a) an angel (b) the king (c) the queen.

- 2. The man that Philip met there was an official from:(a) Egypt(b) Ethiopia(c) Nigeria.
- 3. The man that Philip found was riding:(a) on a horse(b) in a chariot(c) on a wagon.
- 4. From what book of the Bible was the man reading?(a) Ezekiel(b) Isaiah(c) Jeremiah.
- 5. Philip told the official the Scriptures all referred to:(a) the apostles(b) Jesus(c) the Romans.
- 6. After understanding the Scriptures, the man asked to be:

(a) baptized (b) taken home (c) taken to a church.

Keep In Mind

"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"" (Acts 8:36, NIV).

Choosing What's Best

How well do you do at making friends with those who differ from you? How well is your church doing in bringing in different kinds of people? What can both you and your church do differently?



Doing My Part

Your challenge this week is to reflect on your answer in the "Choosing What's Best" section. Develop a strategy to be more open to all people, and help your church do the same.

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