

**Acts of the Holy Spirit - 10**  
**Simon the not so Great – Week of November 20, 2016**  
**Bay Park Life Groups – Leader**

In life we learn from both our victories and our failures. It's a lot more fun learning from our successes as opposed to our defeats. Yet the fact remains, we learn as much from what brings us pain as from what brings us joy. Simon Magus\* stands as a great spiritual reminder of what not to do or cherish in this life. The beauty of learning from the failures of others is that it's a lot less painful. The key to learning from Simon is to humbly take the warnings to heart.

1. One thing you're looking forward to in the coming week?

Read Acts 8:9-25 together

2. If you're a follower of Christ, did you come to believe in an instant or over time? Did you "convert" more than once?
3. Those who believed were also baptized, with little delay between the two events. What is the significance of baptism and what role has it played in your spiritual journey?
4. Learning from Simon.
  - Looking at verses 13, 18-23, do you think Simon really believed?
  - What was Simon's main problem?
  - Looking at verse 24, do you think Simon repented?

We're told that *Simon believed and was baptized*, yet Peter later states *your heart is not right before God*. This seems to indicate that Simon had not truly converted. Some would argue that he did and then later fell away (lost his salvation), but the text doesn't go there. Probably most enlightening are Peter's words in verse 23 where Simon is declared to be full of bitterness (jealousy) and bound (captive) to sin. The language seems to imply a person who has yet to be set free by Christ, though in the end only God knows. The best way to read verse 13 is that Simon intellectually was convinced of the truth of Christ, but that there was no real heart transformation - no new birth.

Simon's main problem seems to be a lust for power and recognition. The word *bitterness* = to be very jealous, to be terribly envious, to be bitterly envious. Simon was struggling with the issue of control – he wanted it for his life and appearances.

Did Simon repent afresh? Tim Keller, quoting John Stott put's it this way: "*Simon's response to Peter's rebuke is not encouraging. He showed no sign of repentance... instead of praying for forgiveness... what really concerned him was not that he might receive God's pardon, but only that he might escape God's judgment... Simon's tears*

[may] have been tears of remorse or rage, but not of repentance.” Stott, *The Message of Acts*, p.151. In other words, Simon seems only concerned that he might be hurt, not that he has hurt God. That is not a good sign!<sup>1</sup>

5. Read Matthew 20:25-28, John 13:12-15 and Philippians 2:3-8. What does greatness and authority look like in God’s Kingdom? In what ways does this vision of greatness collide with the pervasive “powers” and attitudes in our culture?
6. Simon Magus stands as a three fold warning to us:
  - You will rise or fall on who’s the greatest of them all (you or Jesus, contentment or jealousy).
  - If you want a power and purpose that money can’t buy, then money has to be powerless over you.
  - Not everyone who believes and is baptized is a disciple of Jesus.Personally, which warning grabs you the most and why? How has God’s grace and victory been experienced in your life related to these warnings?
7. Though legends and traditions abound, we’re not told how Simon’s story ended. Why do you think God chose to leave us on a cliffhanger?

Simon Magus is someone God wants us to learn from. By leaving us hanging the text really shines the light away from Simon and back on to us – what will you do in light of what you now understand? The real question being – how will your story end? C S Lewis has a great line from *The Horse and his Boy*: *Child, 'said the Lion, 'I am telling you your story, not hers. No one is told any story but their own.*

*Simon Magus* is Simon’s historical name. *Magus* coming from the same word where we get *magi* in Scripture. If you Google “Simon Magus” you will find information about the legends and traditions that exist concerning what came of him after Acts 8. Simply put, none of it ends well.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts*, (Redeemer, 2005) p 76