



10

The Gospel Spreads

Key Theme

- God is sovereign over all things.

Key Passages

- Romans 8:28; Acts 8:4–8, 8:26–31, 8:34–38

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain how the gospel spread to Samaria.
- Explain how the gospel spread to Ethiopia.



Lesson Overview



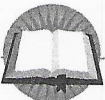
Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: The Gospel Spreads Class Notes

Students will fill out The Gospel Spreads Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

The followers of Jesus were being persecuted in Jerusalem for their faith and belief in Jesus Christ. However, God used it for good. The Christians were scattered as they left their homes to avoid the persecution. As they moved, the gospel moved with them and spread quickly. In addition to this, God used Philip in a special way. Philip preached to the Ethiopian official who believed, was baptized, and likely took the gospel back to Ethiopia!



Activity 2: Truth Be Told Review Game

Students will review the lesson by playing the Truth Be Told Review Game.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- ☐ Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



THE GOSPEL SPREADS CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one The Gospel Spreads Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Print one The Gospel Spreads Map.
- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.



TRUTH BE TOLD REVIEW GAME

- ☐ Assemble the Truth Be Told Game Board Posters found in your curriculum kit.
- ☐ Print the Truth Be Told Game Components from the Resource DVD-ROM. Keep the Truth Be Told Question Answer Key for your use.
- ☐ Cut apart the Truth Be Told Number Cards. These will determine how many spaces to move. OR bring in dice or a game spinner to be used to move teams around the board.
- ☐ Cut apart the Truth Be Told Question Cards.
- ☐ Bring buttons or other small items to use as game pieces for each team. Use poster putty for adhering game pieces to the game board.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student

- ☐ The Gospel Spreads Class Notes for each student
- ☐ The Gospel Spreads Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

- ☐ The Gospel Spreads Map
- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Quarter 2, Lessons 2, 3, and 4 Lesson Theme Posters

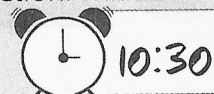
- ☐ Truth Be Told Game Board
- ☐ Truth Be Told Number Cards OR use dice or a game spinner
- ☐ Truth Be Told Question Cards
- ☐ Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- ☐ Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team
- ☐ Poster putty



Memory Verse

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above along with this background.

Just before His ascension back to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples one last command. They were to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching others to observe the things Jesus had commanded. In light of this command, Jesus promised He would be with them always (Matthew 28:18–20). Not only that, but Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit would come and help them to carry out this last command (John 16:7–8; Acts 1:8). And on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, began to preach, and many were added to the church (Acts 2:41).

Things quickly changed in Jerusalem. The atmosphere for Jesus's followers was rapidly becoming quite tense. The disciples were gaining popularity, and the Lord was adding to the church daily by bringing believers to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47). This was unacceptable in the eyes of the priests, the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees. These men were disturbed that the truth about Jesus Christ—His life, death, and Resurrection—was being preached and being believed. And they made it their mission to stop the apostles from preaching (Acts 4:2–3). The disciples were arrested and forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:17–18). But, the arrests, criticism, and condemnation only served to make the apostles more bold in their preaching as they prayed for the help and courage the Holy Spirit could bring (Acts 4:29–31).

As the apostles continued to preach, the religious leaders became even angrier. The tensions continued to rise until Stephen, the first martyr for Jesus, was dragged from the city and stoned to death for proclaiming the gospel (Acts 7:54–59). Things went from bad to worse for the Christians, and they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria because of the violent persecution (Acts 8:1–3).

So what was going on? What was God's plan? Why were Jesus's followers being arrested, beaten, killed, and run out of town? The answer? So the Word and truth about Jesus Christ would spread—and spread quickly. Until now not many had preached Jesus in Judea and Samaria. But here we read that those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. The Bible tells us specifically about Philip who went down to the city of Samaria where he was able to preach Christ, minister to the people, and bring joy in the truth to that city (Acts 8:4–8).

The Bible also tells us of God's supernatural intervention, through the appearance of an angel, to send Philip on another missionary trip to the south along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. As he journeyed, Philip was given the opportunity to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch. This man of Ethiopia listened to Philip as he explained the book of Isaiah and clarified that it was Jesus Christ of whom the prophet Isaiah was writing. The Ethiopian believed what he heard about Jesus and was baptized, right there and then! And because he was a man of great authority in Ethiopia who worked for Queen Candace, it is likely his testimony and changed life did much to further the gospel in that region (Acts 8:27).

The early Christians were suffering severe persecution—even to death. They ran for their lives from their persecutors. But God was working. What the believers were experiencing would actually further the spread of the gospel and grow the church, not only into Judea and Samaria, as mentioned in Acts 8:1, but also beyond to the Gentiles, as we see in Acts 11:19–21:

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists [Gentiles], preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Persecution is real. And in God's goodness and sovereignty, He ordains persecution and uses it to grow His church and fulfill the Great Commission. It started in the first century when the Christians were scattered and went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:1). And it continues today.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

God is committed to His purposes, one of which is to reach all nations with the good news of the life, death, and Resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. And one of the means God uses to fulfill this purpose is persecution.

In the early chapters of Acts, we see how the Jerusalem church enjoyed wonderful fellowship and had a good reputation. There was strong unity among believers. Through the church there was powerful preaching of the kingdom of God (Acts 2:46–47). The Bible tells us that mighty, miraculous signs and wonders were being done by the apostles. People were being healed,

the Word was spreading, and multitudes of men and women were being added to the church (Acts 5:12–16). Who would want to leave a church like that? These church members in Jerusalem, no doubt, were basking in the blessings of God.

But Jesus had promised the coming of the Holy Spirit who would empower His people to be His witnesses not only in Jerusalem but also to Judea, Samaria, and far beyond their borders (Acts 1:8). And He had commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples of the nations (Matthew 28:19–20).

So, what did God do? He used the persecution of these early believers to get them to leave the comfort of their homes and the blessing of a thriving fellowship as they sought to avoid imprisonment, torture, and often death. As they fled, their faith was strengthened, and the truth of Jesus Christ went with them as they journeyed to distant lands. In this, God's plan to preach the gospel to all nations was being carried out. The church may well have eventually awakened to her calling to send missionaries to other lands, but for now, God would use this season of persecution to motivate His people to grow His church.

God's will was done! And the Christians who were scattered because of the persecution went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

The truth spread first into Judea and Samaria and, by the third century, had extended into what we know today as Western Europe, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and India.

Church history tells us of the journeys of apostles and other church leaders as they endeavored to fulfill Jesus's Great Commission. There is some tradition that James, the brother of John, may have traveled to Spain and established churches there before returning to Jerusalem. Thomas is said to have traveled to India with the gospel. In fact, the churches of western India trace their origins to Thomas and refer to themselves as the Thomas Church. Tradition also puts Bartholomew in India where he was eventually martyred. Thaddeus is said to have ministered in Armenia. And others traveled far and wide with the life-giving gospel—all prompted by the persecution experienced in the first century.

Whenever persecution has come, and God's people have been scattered, the gospel has gone with them. In fact, it has been said that ease and comfort are enemies of the gospel more than need and persecution. We are witnessing that in our culture today as churches focus more on how large they can become and what innovative technology they can use to attract the culture, seeming to care less about taking the saving message of the true gospel to those who need so desperately to hear it.

Often comfort, ease, affluence, and prosperity cause terrible apathy in the church. Material blessings that should produce more personnel, more energy, and more funds for the cause of Christ and His kingdom often produce the exact opposite—weakness, indifference, laziness, self-centeredness, and preoccupation with security.

The Bible has much to say about loving the world (1 John 2:15) and building up for ourselves treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19–21). We are warned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:10 that, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Interestingly, recent studies have shown that it is low-income families that are the most generous group in America. The poorest fifth of U.S. households contribute an average of 4.3 percent of their incomes to charitable organizations. The richest fifth give just 2.1 percent. In other words, the poorest members of the church are twice as generous as the richest members. Some might say we are too comfortable and too wealthy to understand the urgency of the gospel.

What is the answer? It would not be to seek persecution, for God alone knows when each of us is ready to stand up under the evils of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:13). But we can examine our own hearts and ask ourselves some penetrating questions: Is the prosperity of our culture and our churches furthering the cause of Christ, or is it a hindrance to self-sacrifice in taking the gospel to other lands? How does our personal giving to missions and to the church compare to the rest of our spending? Does it reflect Christ's command to preach the gospel to all nations? And, are we prepared to suffer for Christ in order to grow His church?

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Sovereign Lord, Savior, Teacher, I praise you because you direct the events in our lives for good. These early church saints suffered persecution for the sake of the gospel, and the church grew in response to their suffering. Help us to learn from this lesson. You will use all things—even our suffering—to fulfill your plan. I pray for courage, Lord, to stand firm for you in the midst of trials, ridicule, and suffering for your name's sake. Please inspire my students this week. Bring them to a saving knowledge of who you are, your greatness, and the importance of the gospel. Then give them courage to trust that you will guide, direct, and accomplish your will in all circumstances.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



The Gospel Spreads Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ The Gospel Spreads Class Notes for each student
- ☐ The Gospel Spreads Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We will finish them together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see how God worked to spread the gospel around the world.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 9 Lesson Theme Poster. After Jesus ascended to heaven to be with the Father, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and gave them strength and boldness to preach the truth. They realized very quickly they would need that strength as they began to experience persecution through imprisonment, beatings, and even death. Through it all, they continued to preach the gospel, and they rejoiced that they could suffer shame for Jesus Christ.

➤ Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson to point out the events you are discussing.

The Bible tells us that the persecution continued to get worse as those who hated Jesus also showed their hatred for His followers. In fact, this is when we hear about the very first martyr, Stephen. He was stoned to death for his faith and for preaching about the Messiah.

And the Bible tells us about a man named Saul (also known as Paul) who went around the country into towns and villages—and homes—arresting men and women who were followers of Jesus.

This seems like a horrible thing—and it was! Men and women were put into prison. Stephen was killed. The apostles were being beaten and told to STOP preaching in the name of Jesus. We might think, “Where was God? Why would He allow all of this?”

Romans 8:28

To answer those questions, I’d like you to turn to Romans 8:28. Will someone read that for us? *Romans 8:28. Choose a student to read the verse.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Look at that verse in your Bible closely to answer a few questions.

Observe the Text

- ? This verse talks about things working out for good. What kinds of things is it talking about? What things work out for good? *Romans 8:28. All things.*
- ? Yes. This says that ALL things work out for good. But this is true for certain people. Who are they? Look at the verse for the answer. *Romans 8:28. Those who love God and are called according to His purpose.*

SOVEREIGN

(Refer to Attributes Poster)

That’s right. God promises that everything will work out for good for those who love Him. God is in control of everything—He is sovereign. *Refer to the Attributes of God Poster.* And He was in control of the early church, the followers of Jesus, and the things that were happening to them. God would work it all for good.

- ? Before we move on, will someone read #1 on the class notes for us? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Sovereign. Have students complete #1.*

The early Christians were being persecuted! And many of them had to run for their lives. They left their homes and moved to other areas so they wouldn’t be caught and put in prison.

- ? We just said that God works everything for good for believers who love Him. How could this be good—that the people had to run from their homes to escape prison? *Allow discussion.*

God had a plan. His plan was that the people would run from Jerusalem. But they would not forget their faith or the gospel. And as they moved, they took the truth about Jesus with them!

Now turn in your Bibles to Acts 8:4–8. Let’s see what God had in mind!

This tells us about the Apostle Philip. He was a missionary. Let's read about him. *Choose students to read the verses.*

? Look in Acts 8:4. What people is this verse about? *The people who were scattered.*

? And why were they scattered? *Acts 8:4. Allow discussion.*

They were being persecuted for their faith. They had to run from their homes so they wouldn't be arrested.

? And where did the people who were scattered because of the persecution go? *Acts 8:4. They went everywhere.*

Refer to The Gospel Spreads Map. You can see Jerusalem on this map. Now, think about how the persecution caused many people to run for their lives. They left their homes in Jerusalem and moved to other areas so they wouldn't be caught and put in prison. They moved to other places far and wide, away from Jerusalem—even to other nations!

? And what were they doing? Look in Acts 8:4 again. *Preaching the Word.*

Yes! They were running for their lives, but they were still telling others about Jesus.

? Look at Acts 8:5. Where did Philip go? *He went to the city of Samaria.*

? *Refer to The Gospel Spreads Map. Point out Jerusalem and Samaria. Philip started out in Jerusalem. But he went to Samaria. What did Philip do there? Acts 8:5. He preached Christ to them.*

? How did the people of Samaria respond to Philip and the gospel? *Acts 8:6. They heeded what was spoken.*

? Does anyone know what "heeded" means? *Allow discussion.*

It means they listened to what was being said. They took notice of it. They were interested.

? Why were the people in Samaria so interested in what Philip was saying? What did they see? Look in Acts 8:6 again. *They heard and saw the miracles he did.*

Philip went to Samaria. The Holy Spirit was doing miracles through him. The people saw what he was doing, and they listened to what he had to say about Jesus because of the miracles they saw.

? What happened in that city when they heard the truth about Jesus from Philip? Look in Acts 8:8. *There was great joy there.*

There was great joy there as they heard about Jesus!

? Let's go back to the class notes for a little review. Will someone read #2 for us? How will you complete that? *Assign a reader. Samaria, Christ. Have students complete #2.*

? And what about #3? What happened in Samaria? Will someone read that? *Assign a reader. Heard, saw. Have students complete #3.*

- ? Now #4. The people heard about Jesus. How did they respond? Assign a reader. Joy, truth. Have students complete #4.

Discover the Truth

Yes! There was

heard about the Savior, Jesus. Jesus came to earth, lived, died, and was resurrected—all so that sinners who repent of their sins in faith can have eternal life! Jesus's followers were sharing the truth about Jesus to different people in different parts of the world. And the church continued to grow!

- ? Before we play our game today, let's go back and finish the class notes. Will someone read #5 for us? How will you complete that sentence? Assign a reader. Philip, Ethiopia. Have students complete #5.

- ? And what about #6? Will someone read that for us? Assign a reader. Reading, Isaiah. Have students complete #6.

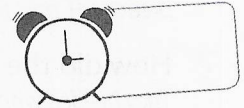
- ? Great! Will someone read #7? Assign a reader. Help. Have students complete #7.

- ? And #8. What is the answer to that? Assign a reader. Jesus. Have students complete #8.

- ? What did Philip do? Who can answer #9? Assign a reader. Told. Have students complete #9.

- ? What did the Ethiopian do? Will someone read #10? Assign a reader. Believed, baptized. Have students complete #10.

- ? And finally #11. What were the disciples doing? Assign a reader. Gospel. Have students complete #11.



➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.



Truth Be Told Review Game

MATERIALS

- ☐ Truth Be Told Game Board
- ☐ Truth Be Told Question Cards
- ☐ Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- ☐ Truth Be Told Number Cards (or game spinner or dice)
- ☐ Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team
- ☐ Poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide your class into teams. Teams will take turns drawing a Truth Be Told Question Card. Team members will take turns answering the questions. They will quickly determine an answer and give it. If they are correct, they will draw a Truth Be Told Number Card and move that number of spaces on the game board. As play proceeds, follow the directions on the game board. Alternate between teams as long as time permits.

and answering the question. If the answer is correct, you will draw a number card and move your game piece that many spaces. All directions on the board must be followed. Place used cards underneath the stacks. Answers to the questions are provided on the Truth Be Told Question Answer Key on the Resource DVD-ROM.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Good playing! Congratulate the winning team.

God used the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem for His good purpose. The people scattered in order to avoid being arrested, and they took the good news about Jesus Christ with them. God even sent Philip on a special journey—one that would take the



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to Lesson Theme Poster. The church in Jerusalem grew quickly after the Holy Spirit came. But it wasn't long before persecution began. It was a difficult and scary time for Jesus's followers. But God used it for His good purpose. The Christians were forced to leave their homes to avoid being arrested. Their faith wasn't left behind in Jerusalem with their homes and jobs. No! It was in their hearts and minds. So, everywhere they went the good news of Jesus was preached.

God also used Philip to spread the gospel even farther away. Philip went to Samaria where many heard about Jesus and believed. Then God sent an angel to tell him to go to a certain road to meet a man from Ethiopia. That man wanted the Scriptures explained to him. And when Philip told him all about Jesus and how He was the promised Messiah, the Ethiopian believed and was baptized. It is very likely that this man from Ethiopia took what he had been taught about Jesus back to his homeland and shared the gospel with many others! The truth about Jesus was spreading!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

It looked like Philip and the early Christians were in a terrible situation. They were persecuted, treated badly, arrested, and some were even killed because of their faith in Jesus. But they trusted God and kept the faith. What seemed like a bad situation, God used for His good—by using them to tell others about Jesus and growing the church!

There are times when things don't look good to us on the outside. We often can't imagine how God would use something for good. Maybe someone is sick . . . or someone dies . . . or you have to move. There are lots of things that happen in our lives every day that seem bad when we look at them. But we need to remember that God is in control.

? *Refer to Attributes of God Poster.* What attribute am I talking about when I say God is in control of everything? *Sovereign.*

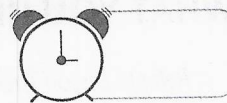
SOVEREIGN
(Refer to Attributes Poster)

God is sovereign. And He tells us in His Word that He works all things together for good for those who love Him. We don't always understand what God is doing. And we often can't see how something that looks so bad can really turn out for good. But if we are Christians, we can believe that it is true. Christians, those who trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind students to practice the memory verse this week.

and eternal life, are children of God. And God only does what is best for His children. That is the promise He makes, and that is the truth about Him we can trust.

God used persecution, and sometimes death, to spread the gospel to other nations. And He can work our situations for His good as well! We must trust Him!



MEMORY VERSE

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He is good and He wants what is best for His people.
- Ask God to help us believe and spread the gospel.
- Ask God to help us trust Him when bad things happen and to remember that He is using all things—good and bad—for His purpose in the lives of His children.