SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL

The Name of Simon or the Name of Jesus?

A devotional journey through Acts 8:9-24

A Six-Day Devotional Based on This Week's Sermon

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Acts 8:12 - “the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (NIV)

Across six days, Simon’s story confronts the rule of self, the need for approval and the danger of wanting God’s power without surrender. The journey leads us toward a new King, a new kingdom and a life lived beneath the name of Jesus.

Based on the Sunday morning sermon preached by Grant Askham
at The Bridge Church on 5 July 2026

READ SLOWLY. REFLECT HONESTLY. PRAY PERSONALLY.

Each day is designed for about 15 minutes, including Scripture, reflection, three memory questions and prayer.

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DAY 1

Whose Name Am I Living For?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

In the middle of Acts, with the early church growing, the Holy Spirit moving, persecution spreading and remarkable things happening, Scripture pauses to tell us about a man named Simon. His story is brief, but it is there for a reason. The sermon begins with a question: What will people one day say about your life? Simon's story confronts us with two names - the name of Simon and the name of Jesus. That tension runs through the whole message.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:9-11 (NIV)**
>
> *9 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.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Simon had spent years becoming "somebody great." People watched him, listened to him and were amazed by him. His identity and influence were built around what people thought of Simon.

He is an extreme example of something that lives in all of us: the desire to do life my way. My plans. My comfort. My reputation. My timing. My control. Self-rule comes naturally. Surrender does not.

That is why the Christian life is not simply about adding Jesus to the life I have already chosen. The gospel confronts the throne of my life. It asks who actually has the final say.

Simon represents a life lived under the authority of self. Jesus calls me into a life lived under the authority of a King. So the most important question is not merely, “Do I believe in Jesus?” It is: Whose name is my life really making great?

I can even do good things for the wrong name. I can serve, help, lead, teach, work hard and succeed - and somewhere deep inside still need people to notice me.

The challenge is not to make my name look good and then ask Jesus to bless it. The challenge is to place my name beneath His.

Today I want to sit with one simple truth: there are two ways to live - in my own name, or in the name of Jesus. Simon’s life warns me where the first road leads. The rest of the sermon shows what the second road requires.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What were the two names contrasted throughout the sermon?
2	What did Simon's way of life represent?
3	What was the question the sermon asked at both the beginning and the end?

PRAYER

Jesus, I do not want to spend my life quietly building my own name. Show me where I am still living by my way, my control and my reputation. Teach me to place my name beneath Yours and to live today for the name of Jesus. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Whose name am I living for - mine or Jesus'?

DAY 2

Not Everything Amazing Is Godly

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I was introduced to the central contrast of the sermon: the name of Simon or the name of Jesus. Simon represents the natural human desire to live by self-rule - to do life my way, build my reputation and protect my control. The question I carried with me was: Whose name am I living for?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Matthew 24:24 (NIV)**
>
> *24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Simon amazed people. That mattered to him.

The sermon gave a simple but important warning: not everything that amazes me is godly. The impressive is not automatically spiritual. The spectacular is not automatically the work of God. Matthew 24:24 warns that people can be deceived by signs and wonders, which means I need discernment - not simply amazement.

But the sermon then went deeper. Why did Simon need to amaze people?

Acts says that he presented himself as "somebody great." The sermon connected this to insecurity and the need for external validation. Simon needed other people to confirm his greatness.

That is uncomfortable because this can hide in ordinary life. I can become too dependent on praise. I can feel unsettled when my work goes unnoticed. I can need people to recognise my knowledge, contribution or sacrifice. I can become defensive when someone questions me because it feels as though they are questioning my worth.

The alternative is an identity received, not achieved. An achieved identity must constantly perform. It needs the next success, compliment, position or recognition. A received identity can rest.

When I know who I am before God, I can see both my strengths and weaknesses honestly. I do not need to pretend I am greater than I am, and I do not need to make myself smaller either. My worth does not rise and fall with the opinion of the room.

The sermon also connected this to worship. Human beings will worship something. When God is no longer at the centre, I can subtly begin worshipping myself, my children, my achievements, my money or my reputation.

Simon wanted people to see his greatness. The purpose of the Christian life is that people increasingly see God's greatness through me.

So today's question is not simply whether I worship God with my mouth. It is: What do I most need people to admire, praise, protect or recognise? That may show me what is competing for the place that belongs to God.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What warning did the sermon give about things that amaze us?
2	What was driving Simon's need to be seen as "somebody great"?
3	What is the difference between an identity achieved and an identity received?

PRAYER

Father, free me from the need to prove my worth to others. Give me discernment so that I am not simply impressed by what is spectacular. Teach me to receive my identity from You and to live so that Your greatness - not mine - is seen through my life. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

My identity is received from God, not achieved before people.

DAY 3

A King and His Kingdom

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that Simon's desire for greatness was driven by insecurity and the need for external validation. I was reminded that not everything amazing is godly and that my identity must be received from God rather than achieved before people. The purpose of my life is not to make myself great, but to reflect the greatness of God.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:12 (NIV)**
>
> *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.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Philip arrived in Samaria preaching two things that belong together: the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

The sermon described it simply: a King and His kingdom.

The kingdom of God is the rule, reign, authority and governance of God. Jesus is the King.

This changes the way I understand salvation. The gospel is certainly the good news that Jesus saves me. But it is not simply an arrangement where I receive forgiveness and then continue governing my own life.

The sermon described salvation as a governance change. Before Christ, the basic question is: What do I want? Under the King, I increasingly learn to ask: Lord, what do You want?

This reaches much further than church attendance, Bible reading or prayer. Those things are vital, but they are not the final goal. The goal is a life increasingly lived under His authority: my work, my marriage, my words, my finances, my ambitions, my reactions, my plans, my private thoughts and my use of influence.

The kingdom asks: Who governs these things?

The gospel came to Simon as the power of God to change him - to save him from darkness, self-determination and the endless need for human approval. It offered him a completely new identity and a completely new government.

The sermon also used the picture of seed falling on soil. The same seed can fall on different hearts and produce different results. The difference is not the seed. The difference is the condition of the soil.

That means I can hear a powerful truth and still resist what it requires. I can agree with God without surrendering to God. I can be moved by the Word without allowing it to take root.

So today I am not simply asking, “What did God say?” I am asking: What does what God said now require of me?

A soft heart does not merely admire truth. It receives it. It lets the King govern.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What were the two things Philip preached?
2	What did the sermon mean by describing salvation as a “governance change”?
3	In the picture of the seed and the soil, what determines whether the seed takes root?

PRAYER

Jesus, You are not only my Saviour; You are my King. Show me where I still want the benefits of Your kingdom while keeping control of my own life. Give me a soft heart that receives Your Word and responds with obedience. Teach me to ask, “Lord, what do You want?” Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The Christian life is a life under new government.

DAY 4

One Degree at a Time

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw the gospel as more than forgiveness - it is a change of government. Philip preached a King and His kingdom. Jesus calls me out of self-rule and into a life where I increasingly ask, "Lord, what do You want?" The condition of my heart determines whether God's Word merely reaches me or truly takes root in me.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)**
>
> *18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Most of us would love instant transformation. One dramatic moment. One prayer. One experience. And suddenly every weakness, bad habit and struggle is gone.

The sermon warned that this desire for instant change can become a desire for something closer to magic than discipleship. Real transformation is often slower.

The picture used in the sermon was of adjusting a scope: one degree, one click at a time. A small adjustment. Then another. Then another. Until what was misaligned is brought into alignment.

That is often what walking with Jesus looks like: one apology, one surrendered attitude, one act of obedience, one change in the way I speak, one decision to forgive, one moment where I choose His will instead of mine. One degree at a time.

The sermon made an important distinction: the fact that transformation is gradual does not mean transformation is optional. There should be evidence of change.

I am not expected to become perfect overnight. But if Jesus is governing my life, somewhere His rule should be becoming visible.

This is where Simon's story becomes serious. Acts 8:13 says he believed, was baptised and followed Philip. He was amazed by what he saw. From the outside, a great deal seemed to have happened. But the deeper question was whether Simon had changed.

The purpose of salvation is not simply "fire insurance" against hell. God saves me to restore me to His purpose and progressively transform me into the likeness of Christ. I am being formed to reflect the character and values of my King and to represent His kingdom.

So I do not need to become discouraged because I am not yet where I should be. But I should ask honestly: Where is the next degree of change? What is Jesus putting His finger on now?

The spiritual life is not about waiting for one enormous moment. It is about walking with Jesus today. And then again tomorrow.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What illustration did the sermon use to describe gradual transformation?
2	What is the difference between slow transformation and no transformation?
3	According to the sermon, what is the purpose of salvation beyond simply escaping hell?

PRAYER

Lord, I often want instant change, but You call me to a daily walk of obedience. Show me the next degree of adjustment You are asking of me. Give me the courage to obey in the small things and let there be visible evidence that I am becoming more like Jesus. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I do not have to change everything today, but I must not resist the next degree of change.

DAY 5 Saviour and Lord

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I was reminded that transformation is usually not instant. God changes me one degree at a time through daily obedience. Growth may be gradual, but there should be evidence of it. The purpose of salvation is not merely to escape judgement but to become increasingly like Christ and represent His kingdom.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Matthew 6:33 (NIV)**
>
> *33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

This is perhaps the hardest part of Simon's story.

He believed. He was baptised. He followed Philip. He was amazed by the power of God. And yet, when Simon saw the power of the Holy Spirit, his old heart revealed itself. He wanted to buy that power.

Why? Because Simon was still thinking like Simon.

He saw the things of God through the lens of his old kingdom: influence, greatness, reputation and personal gain. He wanted the power of God, but he had not surrendered the kingdom of Simon.

That is the great warning of the sermon: I can want Jesus as Saviour while resisting Jesus as Lord.

Saviour means I need Him to rescue me. Lord means He has authority over me. The second is where my surrender becomes visible.

Matthew 7:21 warns that merely saying “Lord” is not the same as doing the Father’s will. As the sermon put it, saying is easy; the doing part is where the rubber hits the road.

Simon wanted God’s power to serve Simon’s purpose. The kingdom calls me to surrender my power, gifts, work, resources and influence to serve God’s purpose.

That distinction reaches into every part of life. I can ask God to bless my plan, or I can first ask what He wants. I can use my abilities to strengthen my reputation, or I can use them to make Jesus great. I can pray for God to help me build my kingdom, or I can surrender my kingdom to His.

The sermon connected this to Matthew 6:33: seek first the kingdom of God. That does not merely mean performing more religious activities. It means learning to live under His governance: What do You want, Lord?

Simon saw. Simon believed. Simon was baptised. But he resisted the transformation that the King demanded, and he missed the purpose God had for him.

Today I need to ask more than whether Jesus is part of my life. I need to ask: Is He actually Lord of it?

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What three outward things had happened in Simon's life before his heart was exposed?
2	What is the difference between receiving Jesus as Saviour and submitting to Him as Lord?
3	What question expresses what it means to seek first God's kingdom?

PRAYER

Jesus, forgive me where I have wanted Your help without wanting Your rule. I do not want Your power to serve my kingdom. I surrender my plans, abilities, influence and future to You. Be not only my Saviour but truly my Lord. Teach me to ask, "What do You want?" Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I do not want Jesus to help me build my kingdom; I want to surrender my kingdom to His.

DAY 6

Above All Names, Jesus Christ

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I reached the heart of Simon's tragedy. He believed, was baptised and followed Philip, but he still wanted the power of God to serve the kingdom of Simon. The question was no longer simply whether he believed, but whether Jesus was truly his Lord. To seek first God's kingdom is to keep asking: "Lord, what do You want?"

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:22 (NIV)**
>
> *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.*

THE WHOLE SERMON IN ONE FINAL REFLECTION

Simon's story begins with a man who wants to be known as somebody great. He amazes people. He has influence. His identity depends on the attention and approval of others. His life is governed by one basic principle: my way.

Then the gospel arrives. Philip preaches the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. A new King stands before Simon. A new kingdom is offered to him. A new identity becomes possible. A new purpose is placed within his reach.

Simon believes. He is baptised. He follows Philip. He is amazed. But Simon's deepest problem is not what he believes. It is who still governs him.

The gospel came to transform him from the inside out - from insecurity to an identity received from God, from self-worship to worship of God, from self-rule to the rule of Christ, from building his own name to living for the name of Jesus.

But Simon wanted the power of the new kingdom without surrendering the old one. He wanted what God could do to strengthen what Simon wanted to become.

That is why his story is such a powerful warning to me. I can hear the Word but have hard soil. I can be impressed without being transformed. I can believe without obeying. I can participate in Christian things while protecting areas of self-rule. I can ask Jesus to bless my kingdom instead of surrendering it.

The answer is not instant perfection. The answer is a life of ongoing surrender - one degree at a time.

The gospel is a governance change. Jesus becomes both Saviour and Lord. I learn to ask not only what I want, but what my King wants. His rule begins to touch my attitudes, relationships, work, money, ambitions, words and decisions. There should be evidence. Not perfection, but change.

And then the sermon returns to where it began: What will people one day say about my life?

Simon had potential. The gospel reached him. God’s purpose was placed before him. But he resisted the transformation that God’s kingdom demanded and disappeared from the biblical story.

I do not want that to be the story of my life. I do not want to become known simply for what I knew, achieved, built or accomplished. I want my life to say that Jesus was my King; that I was teachable; that I kept adjusting; that when God spoke, I wanted His Word to find good soil; that I did not live to make my own name great, but placed my name beneath the name above every other name.

The sermon ends where the Christian life must remain: above all names, Jesus Christ.

That is the choice. The name of Simon or the name of Jesus. My kingdom or His kingdom. My way or His way. Self-rule or surrender.

And the question I want to keep asking long after this week is over is simply: Whose name am I living for today?

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER THE WHOLE SERMON

1	What was the central contrast represented by “the name of Simon” and “the name of Jesus”?
2	What did the sermon identify as the true evidence that the gospel is working in a person’s life?
3	What is the one question I want to carry with me beyond these six days?

FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for saving me and calling me into the kingdom of Your Son. I do not want merely to believe, attend, know or be amazed. I want to be transformed. Give me a soft heart where Your Word can take root. Free me from the need to prove myself and show me every place where I still protect my own kingdom or resist Your rule. Change me one degree at a time. Let there be visible

evidence that Jesus is my King. I do not want to spend my life making my own name great. Above all names, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE THOUGHT TO KEEP AFTER THE SIX DAYS

I do not want Jesus to help me build my kingdom. I want to surrender my kingdom, live under His governance, and spend my life making the name of Jesus great.