SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL

The Kingdom Is a Matter of the Heart

Simon the Sorcerer and the Gift of God

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

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Acts 8:14-25 - “Your heart is not right before God.” (NIV)

Over six days we return to Acts 8:14-25 and the story of Simon the Sorcerer. We will open our hearts to receive from Jesus, see how the gospel breaks barriers, seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit, surrender our motives, uproot bitterness, grow in prayer and choose the path of freedom and obedience.

Introduced by Sean Lindecke
Preached by Justin Smit, Elska Lindecke, Devon Askham and Sean Lindecke
Afterwards Callie Swart summed up, added to and concluded
The Bridge Church - Sunday 26 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

Open Your Heart to Receive

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

1 Sean Lindecke opened the morning by asking the church to picture a candlelit room, a table filled with good food, Jesus seated on one side and an empty chair on the other. Jesus was inviting each person to sit with Him and receive the bread He wanted to give. The sermon then moved into Acts 8:14-25, where the gift of God exposed the condition of Simon's heart. The central tension was clear: will I receive God as Lord, or will I try to use the things of God to serve my own name and agenda?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:14-16 (NIV)**
> *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.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

2 Justin Smit reminded the church of the question left by the previous sermon. Simon had been known for making his own name great, while Philip came preaching in the name of Jesus. Philip's ministry astonished Simon because the power did not point back to Philip. It pointed to Jesus. The question for the week is therefore not only, “What am I doing?” but, “In whose name am I doing it?”

That question reaches beyond church ministry. I can serve, lead, work, give, speak, pray or help while quietly protecting my reputation. I may want others to admire my usefulness or depend on me. Even spiritual-looking activity can centre on me. Simon's story warns that God sees what rules the heart.

The setting in Samaria also matters. Justin described the hostility and separation between Jews and Samaritans. They avoided one another, did not naturally sit together and carried deeply rooted ideas about the other group. Yet the gospel came to Samaria and was received. Peter and John did not stay safely in Jerusalem. They went to people whom their culture had taught them to avoid.

Justin said that when Jesus comes, borders break, chains break and our preconceived ideas about other people break. The gospel does not simply make me more religious inside the boundaries I already prefer. It confronts the barriers in my heart. Enemies can become friends. People I have kept at a distance can become brothers and sisters around the same table.

Sean's picture of the empty chair gives me the right place to begin. Before I rush into the week looking for something impressive to do, Jesus invites me to sit, listen and receive. This is not passive. It is a deliberate opening of the heart. I come without pretending that my motives are already pure. I allow His Word to search me and His Spirit to show me where self-interest, prejudice or fear is still shaping my response.

I also need to notice the movement of the apostles. When they heard that Samaria had accepted the Word, they responded to what God was doing. They did not treat the good news as a threat to their familiar world. They went to strengthen and serve. The kingdom was crossing a boundary, and they chose to move with it.

3 Who sits outside the circle I naturally choose? Is there a person, culture, language, background or personality that I quietly avoid? The sermon did not allow the church to speak about the Holy Spirit while keeping old divisions untouched. The same gospel that reconciles me to God begins to change how I see and approach other people.

Today I can take the empty chair. I can ask Jesus, “What bread do You want to give me?” I can also ask, “What part of my heart needs to be opened so that Your gospel can move through me?” The first step is not to make my own name great. It is to receive from Christ and live in His name.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What picture did Sean use to invite the church to open its heart and receive from Jesus?
2	What contrast did Justin draw between Simon's name and the name of Jesus?
3	Which dividing barrier or preconceived idea may the gospel be asking me to surrender?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for inviting me to sit with You and receive the bread You want to give. Search my motives and show me where I am protecting my own name, comfort or prejudice. Open my heart to Your Word, and help me move toward the people Your gospel is reaching. Let my life point to Your name, not mine. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Jesus invites me to His table so that I can receive from Him and live in His name.

DAY 2

The Word Is the Beginning

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I accepted Jesus' invitation to sit at His table and receive. The sermon began by contrasting Simon's desire to make his own name great with Philip's ministry in the name of Jesus. The gospel then crossed the old boundary between Jerusalem and Samaria, showing that when Jesus comes, dividing barriers begin to break.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:17 (NIV)**
> *17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Justin explained that receiving the Word of God was the beginning, not the end, of the Samaritans' journey. They had accepted the message and had been baptized in the name of Jesus, but Peter and John came to pray for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. The apostles recognised that God had more for these new believers than information or an outward beginning. They were to be empowered to walk as Jesus walked.

1 Justin described the Christian walk as repentance, baptism and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. His point was not that the Word is unimportant. The Word had brought the Samaritans to faith. The point was that God did not intend His people to remain spectators who know the message but do not live in the power and leading of the Spirit.

This challenges a safe version of Christianity. I can collect sermons, agree with truth and remember Bible verses, yet still rely almost entirely on my own strength. I can know what Jesus commands and still feel unable to obey. The sermon called the church beyond merely receiving the Word to being led and empowered by the Spirit.

2 The simple action in verse 17 is also important. Peter and John placed their hands on the believers and prayed. Justin urged the church not to treat this as a small or meaningless act. God works through His people. Prayer, encouragement and the laying on of hands can become a tangible way in which the church helps one another receive and respond to what God is doing.

Justin asked the congregation to recognise where they might be in the story. Some may be like Peter and John: they have walked with God, know the Spirit's help and need to look around for someone who requires prayer and support. Others may be like the believers in Samaria: they have received the Word, but they know they need help, filling and fresh empowerment.

Both positions require humility. The mature believer must not become self-sufficient or superior. Peter and John went to serve what God had already begun through Philip. The newer or struggling believer must not pretend to be fine. There is no shame in saying, “Please pray for me. I need the Holy Spirit's help.”

The sermon also protects us from chasing an experience for its own sake. The Spirit is not given so that I can appear impressive. He empowers me for the purposes of God. The evidence I should desire is not that others think I am spiritual, but that I increasingly walk as Jesus walked - with obedience, courage, love and dependence on the Father.

3 Today I should ask two honest questions. Where do I need to receive prayer rather than continue in my own strength? And who around me may need a helping hand, encouragement and prayer? Receiving the Word begins the journey. The Spirit empowers the church to continue it together.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What three parts of the Christian walk did Justin identify?
2	Why did Peter and John travel to Samaria after the believers had received the Word?
3	Do I presently need to receive prayer, offer prayer to someone else, or both?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank You that I am not expected to follow Jesus in my own strength. Fill me, lead me and empower me for God's purposes. Give me humility to ask for prayer when I need help and love to notice those who need encouragement. Help me walk as Jesus walked, not for attention, but in obedience. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Receiving the Word begins the journey; the Holy Spirit empowers me to continue it.

DAY 3

You Cannot Command the Wind

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that receiving the Word is the beginning of the Christian journey. Peter and John prayed for the believers in Samaria and laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. The church was challenged to receive help humbly, pray for others and seek the Spirit's power for God's purposes rather than for spiritual appearance.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:18-19 (NIV)**
> *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."*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

1 Elska Lindecke introduced a picture of two men trying to cross an ocean. A wealthy man spent a fortune building the greatest ship in the harbour. He stood on the deck and demanded that the voyage begin, but he could not make the wind blow. Nearby, a humble sailor prepared a simple wooden sailboat. He cleared the deck, readied the sail, waited for the breeze and then yielded to its direction.

The same wind the wealthy man could not command carried the sailor across the water. Elska used the picture to expose Simon's approach. Simon saw the Holy Spirit's power and wanted the ability for himself. He had an agenda and a direction in mind. He did not ask how he could surrender to God. He asked how he could obtain and control the visible power.

Human power can build the ship, but only the wind moves it. I can build an impressive life, reputation, ministry or platform through discipline, money and skill. Those things may create a strong-looking vessel, but they cannot produce the life of the Spirit. Without surrender, I can remain spiritually motionless while looking successful from the shore.

Elska said that yielding brings power. The sailor did not become powerful by mastering the wind. He moved because he prepared and surrendered to what he could not control. In the same way, the Spirit brings conviction, transformation and direction as I submit to God's kingdom and will.

2 Simon understood that something significant was taking place, but he misunderstood the “currency” of the kingdom. He reached for money because worldly systems had taught him that influence and ability could be purchased. The gift of God, however, is not bought by wealth, status, networking or ambition. Spiritual authority grows in a life surrendered to God, submitted to His authority and willing to be transformed.

Elska explained that the attempt to buy or sell spiritual things became known as simony. That is a sobering legacy. Simon wanted personal gain and validation. He wanted the glory of the wind without the humility of the sail. His request revealed what he treasured and what still ruled his heart.

3 This is not only a warning for people who literally offer money for a spiritual gift. I can try to control the things of God in subtler ways. I may seek a position because I need recognition. I may pray mainly so that my plans will succeed. I may want spiritual influence without accepting correction, hidden service or patient waiting. I may want God's power while keeping my own direction.

Elska ended with a direct question: “Are you trying to command the wind, or are you willing to let it transform you?” Today I can lower the demand that God move according to my plan. I can clear the deck of self-promotion, raise the sail of surrender and say, “Holy Spirit, lead me in Your direction.”

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did the wealthy ship and the humble sailboat represent in Elska's illustration?
2	What was wrong with the “currency” Simon tried to use to obtain God's gift?
3	Where am I trying to control God's direction instead of yielding to the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, forgive me for the ways I try to control what only You can give and direct. Remove my need for recognition, power and personal validation. Teach me to prepare faithfully, wait humbly and yield quickly when You lead. Transform my heart and move my life in the direction of God's kingdom. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I cannot command the wind of the Spirit; I can prepare, surrender and follow.

DAY 4

When the Heart Is Not Right

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday Elska contrasted a wealthy man trying to command the wind with a humble sailor who prepared his sail and yielded. Simon wanted the visible power of the Spirit for his own agenda. The gift of God could not be bought or controlled. The kingdom's way was surrender, a transformed heart and submission to God's authority.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:20-22 (NIV)**
> *20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, 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."*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Devon Askham said this part of the message held up a mirror. Receiving the gospel is the departure point, but there is a journey to be walked. The position of the heart determines whether I move deeper into life under God's rule or remain attached to the old system that once governed me.

He referred to Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:3-6 about being born again, born of water and the Spirit, and entering the kingdom of God. The kingdom is not an extra spiritual ability added to an otherwise unchanged life. It is the rule of God received in a renewed life. We are empowered by God, but for God's purposes, not our own.

Peter's response to Simon was severe because Simon's request revealed a heart still governed by something else. Simon wanted to use the power of God to preserve the fortune, fame and reputation on which he had built his identity. Peter did not flatter him or treat his motive as a small misunderstanding. He named the truth: “Your heart is not right before God.”

1 Devon explained that “May your money perish with you” was not a spiteful outburst. Peter was warning Simon that what he trusted was passing away. The world's desires and pride do not last. Temporary trust produces temporary fruit and a temporary inheritance. What Simon had treated as security could not carry him into the eternal goodness of God.

The mirror now turns toward my own prayers and decisions. Devon asked whether I solve things with my intellect and then ask God to support what I have chosen, or whether I first trust God and then use the mind, skill and resources He has given for His purposes. The difference may be hidden from other people, but it is visible to God in the intention of the heart.

2 Money was Simon's obvious currency. Mine may be competence, experience, influence, control or the approval of others. Any of these can become the system I trust before I trust God. I may still use Christian language, yet expect God to strengthen my kingdom rather than bring my heart under His governance.

3 Peter gave Simon a way to respond: repent and pray. Repentance is more than feeling embarrassed after being exposed. It is a turning of the heart from the wrong ruler to the true King. It says, “God, this motive is wicked because it puts me at the centre. Forgive me. Change what I want. Let Your will and Your purposes govern me.”

Devon contrasted Simon's legacy with that of the apostles. The apostles submitted themselves to God in service, and their lives continued to carry the gospel. Simon became remembered for trying to purchase spiritual power. Today I can choose a different legacy. I can bring my motives into the light and ask God to make my heart right before Him.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	Why did Devon describe Peter's words to Simon as truth rather than spite?
2	What temporary “currency” am I most tempted to trust before I trust God?
3	How would repentance change the intention behind one of my current prayers or plans?

PRAYER

Father, hold the mirror of Your truth before my heart. Show me where money, intellect, reputation, control or approval has become my security. I repent of asking You to serve my agenda. Forgive the wrong intentions of my heart and bring me under Your good rule. Use everything You have given me for Your purposes. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

God's gifts are for God's purposes; my heart must come under His rule.

DAY 5 Uproot the Bitterness

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday Devon held up the mirror of Acts 8:20-22. Peter exposed Simon's trust in a passing worldly system and said that his heart was not right before God. The call was to repent, pray and bring money, intellect, influence and every other resource under God's governance, so that His gifts are used for His purposes.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:23-25 (NIV)**
> *23 "For I see that you are 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." 25 After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Sean returned to the passage and focused on Peter's diagnosis: Simon was full of bitterness and captive to sin. He described bitterness as resentment or unforgiveness that slowly poisons the heart. A person can have responded to the gospel and still carry wounds, offences and anger that have not been surrendered to God.

1 Bitterness is not harmless because it works beneath the surface. It contaminates the inner life, strangles faith and keeps a person in bondage. Sean described a spiritual battle over the condition of the heart. The enemy wants shame, guilt, resentment and slavery to shape us, while Jesus comes with love, peace, truth and freedom.

This is why the kingdom of heaven is a matter of the heart. I may be able to hide resentment behind correct words and outward activity, but bitterness limits my response to Jesus as Lord. Sean urged the church to uproot bitterness diligently through repentance and forgiveness. Freedom is not pretending that the hurt did not matter. It is refusing to let the hurt remain the ruler of my heart.

Simon asked Peter to pray for him, and Sean used the moment to emphasise the power and necessity of prayer. “Fish swim, Christians pray.” When I feel unable to pray or far from God, I should not accept the lie that God does not see or hear me. I can pray, and I can ask mature believers to stand with me and pray.

2 Yet Simon's request also revealed the remaining problem. He asked that the consequences Peter had spoken about would not happen to him. He did not ask that his heart be changed. Sean said that God is more interested in the condition of the heart than in merely removing difficult circumstances.

That distinction searches my own prayers. Of course I may ask God to heal, provide, protect and intervene. Sean encouraged that kind of dependence on the Father. But prayer must also include, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done. Forgive me, and help me forgive.” I need God not only to change what is happening around me, but to change what is happening within me.

3 The passage then turns outward. Peter and John continued preaching in Samaritan villages. The people their culture had taught them to avoid became people to whom they carried the gospel. This movement is connected to the freedom of the heart. Bitterness pulls me inward and keeps old divisions alive. Grace frees me to cross barriers and share what I have received.

Sean said that when I have encountered the love, grace and freedom of the gospel, I need to share it with those who desperately need it, whether I naturally like them or not. Today I can name one bitterness to surrender, one person from whom I have withheld forgiveness and one person beyond my comfort whom God may be asking me to love and serve.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did Sean say bitterness does to the heart and to faith?
2	What did Simon ask prayer to change, and what did he fail to ask God to change?
3	How could forgiveness free me to carry the gospel across a barrier I have maintained?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You came to set hearts free. Show me every root of resentment, unforgiveness, shame or guilt that is keeping me captive. I repent and choose forgiveness. Teach me to pray for changed circumstances and, even more, for a changed heart. Free me to carry Your grace across the barriers I have kept in place. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I will ask God not only to change my circumstances, but to change and free my heart.

DAY 6

Choose the Path of Freedom

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I faced Peter's warning that bitterness poisons the heart and keeps a person captive. Sean called the church to repentance, forgiveness and a life of prayer. Simon wanted the consequences removed, but God wanted the heart changed. Peter and John then carried the gospel across old cultural barriers into many Samaritan villages.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NIV)**
> *17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 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.*

THE WHOLE SERMON IN ONE FINAL REFLECTION

1 The sermon began with an empty chair at Jesus' table. Sean invited us to open our hearts and receive the bread Christ wanted to give. That invitation set the direction for the whole message. The story of Simon was not presented simply as an account of someone else's failure. It was a question about what happens in my heart when I encounter the gift, power and purposes of God.

Justin first showed the gospel moving from Jerusalem into Samaria. Old hostility and separation could not be allowed to determine the reach of Jesus. The Word was received, Peter and John came to help, and the believers received the Holy Spirit. The Christian journey was described as repentance, baptism and empowerment. We are not called merely to know the message, but to walk as Jesus walked in the Spirit's power.

Elska then placed the wealthy ship and humble sailboat before us. Simon wanted to command the wind. He wanted the ability of the apostles without the surrender that shaped their lives. Human effort could build an impressive ship, but only the wind could move it. The gift of God was not for sale. Spiritual authority belonged with a transformed heart submitted to God's kingdom and will.

Devon held up the mirror of Peter's rebuke. Simon's money, reputation and old system of security were passing away. His request revealed that his heart was not right before God. The warning reached our own motives: do I trust God and use His gifts for His purposes, or do I make my plans and ask God to strengthen my kingdom? The response was repentance and prayer.

Sean then exposed the bitterness beneath Simon's ambition. Resentment and unforgiveness can poison the heart even while a person remains outwardly connected to Christian activity. Prayer is essential, but true repentance asks for more than changed consequences. It asks God to change the heart. Freedom also turns outward, because the apostles continued preaching among the Samaritans rather than returning to old divisions.

After the four preachers had finished, Callie Swart summed up, added to and concluded. He asked why this awkward passage was included in Scripture and warned against claiming faith while still making everything about ourselves. Simon wanted God's power for Simon's purposes. He wanted God as a servant who would do what Simon wanted, rather than God as Savior, Lord and ruler of all.

Callie was especially struck by the danger of bitterness. He saw two paths in the passage. Peter and John continued into the villages, carrying the gospel and moving in God's purpose. Simon disappears from the account. The sermon presented this as a sober warning that bitterness and self-rule can hold a person back from the glory, holiness, freedom and submission into which God calls His people.

The final appeal was simple and urgent: do not be like Simon. Repent. Let your heart remain soft. Do not become locked into your own desires, agenda and life. God is God. The gospel is powerful. Salvation is real. The Holy Spirit is able to bring us into a whole new life.

Today's Scripture captures the path of freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, and the Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ. That transformation is the opposite of Simon's desire. Simon wanted power added to an unchanged agenda. The Spirit gives freedom by changing us.

2 The whole week therefore comes back to the heart. Will I sit in the empty chair and receive from Jesus? Will I let the gospel cross the boundaries I protect? Will I ask for the Spirit's empowerment and receive prayer? Will I raise the sail of surrender instead of trying to command the wind? Will I repent of motives built on money, intellect, status or control? Will I uproot bitterness through forgiveness? Will I carry the gospel to people outside my comfort?

3 This is not a call to produce a dramatic feeling before the week ends. It is a call to make a clear response. I can bring one agenda into submission, seek prayer for one place of bondage, forgive one person, cross one barrier and obey the next thing the Spirit makes clear. A soft heart responds while God is speaking.

The path of glory is not self-exaltation. It is holiness, freedom and submission under the rule of God. Let the sermon remain more than notes from Sunday. Let the Spirit use it to change the direction of the heart and the movement of the life.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER THE WHOLE SERMON

1	What pictures, Scriptures and warnings held together the sermon's message about the heart?
2	Which part of Simon's response most clearly mirrors a motive, bitterness or agenda I need to surrender?
3	What one act of repentance, prayer, forgiveness or gospel obedience will I carry beyond this week?

FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for inviting me to receive from Jesus and for giving the Holy Spirit, who brings freedom and transformation. Keep my heart soft before You. Break my attachment to my own name, agenda and temporary securities. Uproot bitterness, teach me to forgive and bring every motive under Your rule. Fill me with Your Spirit and send me across the barriers I have protected. Make my life point to Jesus and carry the gospel with humility, courage and love. Amen.

THE THOUGHT TO KEEP AFTER THE SIX DAYS

Let my heart stay soft before God: surrendered to His rule, filled with His Spirit, free from bitterness and ready to carry the gospel.