



Simon – the Freedom Fighter

Adapted from “12 Disciples” series by Dennis Marquardt.

Zeal has driven people to do extraordinary things. However, it isn't always a good thing. It can drive people to do the heroic yet drive fanatics and terrorists to do evil. The world has always known zealots, both good and bad ones. It is good to be a Zealot for Jesus when we understand the real dynamics of being "zealous" for Him. Zeal must not be blind, not loving the right things, or lack godly wisdom.

Consider a father whose son went to a certain seminary to study for the ministry. To caution his son against losing faith in the Bible, he warned his son against unbelieving professors by telling him, “Don't let them take Jonah away from you.” The dad thought the “swallowed-by-a-great-fish” story might be one the professors would challenge. Two years later when his son returned home the dad asked, “Do you still have

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Jonah in your Bible?” The son laughed. “That story isn't even in your Bible dad!” The father shocked at that replied, “It certainly is. What do you mean?” Again, the son laughed and insisted, “It's not in your Bible; go ahead, show it to me.” The old man fumbled through his Bible looking for the book of Jonah but could not find it. The dad could see the pages had been cut out. His son then said, “I cut the book of Jonah out of your Bible just before I left two years ago for seminary. Dad, what is the difference if I lost the book of Jonah through studying under non-believers or you lose the book of Jonah through neglect?” The father had been zealous for his son to not neglect God's Word, yet he had himself been less than zealous for God's Word.

Some of the finest followers of Christ are those who are zealous by nature and have aimed that zeal in the right direction—toward Christ and in the service of others. Jesus loved Simon the zealot. He still calls zealots to His service! Simon was a freedom fighter for Israel, known as a *zealot*. He wanted God's people to be independent from foreign powers so he trained for war and plotted against Rome. However, when he met Jesus he found a different kind of freedom; not political,



but spiritual. He then fought the ungodliness in his own heart, and he zealously helped others find freedom from sin's dominion through the Lord Jesus Christ. He remained a "zealot" (freedom fighter) except now he was battling the right enemy.

“COURAGE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following

Acts 1:12–14 (ESV) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 21:37–22:9 (ESV) As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the

steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying: “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.” And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.”

Mark 15:7 (ESV) And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

C1: Simon is referred to as a Zealot. What is your understanding of who were the Zealots during the time of the writing?

C2: Read **Acts 21:38 (ESV)** again. Paul is asked if he was the one who stirred up a revolt. Why do you think Paul was confused with those who wanted to change the political system of the day?

C3: What was it in Paul's past that could have led people to think he was the one who led a revolt?

C4: We can say that Simon had zeal for changing the political regime of his day, but how did his calling to follow Christ change or redirect that zeal?

C5: For what are you zealous? Why?

C6: Simon's political and social zeal became spiritual zeal. How did walking with Jesus influence that change?

C7: How has your walk with Jesus helped change you?

C8: If someone was to judge your life based upon what you were/are zealous for, what would they say is important to you, and why?

C9: What needs to change in your heart so you can be zealous for the things of God?

Exercise #2: Over the next 30 days, in your quiet time, ask the Holy Spirit to change your heart so you can be zealous for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with other men. If you have the courage, write down what do you sense the Holy Spirit saying to you?

“STRENGTH” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Acts 1:12–14 (ESV)

Acts 21:37–22:9 (ESV)

Mark 15:7 (ESV)

S1: Simon the Zealot was part of a group that wanted political change. Some from his group even went so far as to commit murder. Have you ever found yourself involved in the wrong crowd? How much strength did it take to walk away from that group?

Exercise #2: If there are people or a group which you need to walk away from, talk to another Christian man about how to do that safely and quickly.

S2: For Simon to care more about the heart rather than the political system of his day, he needed a change of heart. How has your heart been changed by Jesus Christ?

S2: In Acts 1, Simon is with the other disciples praying after Jesus' command to go and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Have you been baptized by the Holy Spirit? If so, describe that experience.

IMPORTANT!

Exercise #3: If you have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit what is keeping you from receiving Him? Take a moment right now, by yourself or with other men in the group, to ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit – just like in Acts chapter 1.

S3: Jesus not only taught with His words but also by His actions. Describe your actions regarding how you show zeal for the things of God?

S4: Have you ever had misguided enthusiasm for the wrong thing? What and why? Share this openly, as it could really help another man in the church.

S6: Are you more concerned with personal gain than kingdom/spiritual gain in those around you?

Exercise #4: In the next 30 days, pray that your zeal will be increased by a change of heart for those who do not believe or have not heard the gospel message. If you have the courage, write down what action steps can you take to share the love of Christ with you community?

“ENDURANCE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Acts 1:12–14 (ESV)

Acts 21:37–22:9 (ESV)

Mark 15:7 (ESV)

E1: Read **Acts 21:38 (ESV)** again. Paul is confused with someone who began a riot for political reasons. What part of Paul’s past could have possibly led to this confusion?

E2: In **Acts 1 (ESV)**, Simon is praying with the other disciples for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Who are you praying with/for to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

IMPORTANT!

Exercise #2: Ask the Holy Spirit to help you connect with three men this year and give you opportunity to lead them in prayer to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

E3: Jesus changed the heart of Simon the Zealot. How has Jesus changed your heart?

E4: What heart change needs to happen within yourself so that you can become zealous in sharing the gospel of Jesus with others?

E5: There is a difference between changing a political system versus the changing a person's heart. Have you ever allowed your own political views to get in the way of sharing Jesus Christ? Why? Be honest and open here, as this could really help another Christian brother.

Exercise 3: Over the next 30 days, pray about ways you can be zealous for the things of God. If you have the courage, write out an action plan you can implement to use that new God-given zeal.