

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

Acts 8:26-40

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Philip and the Ethiopian official

Key-location: Desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza

Key-repetitions:

- Travel: an angel ordered Philip to go to a deserted place (Ac 8:26); Philip went (Ac 8:27); Ethiopian was on his way home (Ac 8:27); Ethiopian continued on his journey (Ac 8:39); as Philip traveled, he proclaimed the gospel (Ac 8:40).
- Holy Spirit: Holy Spirit told Philip to go near the Ethiopian's chariot (Ac 8:29); Lord's Spirit took Philip away (Ac 8:39).
- Scripture: Ethiopian read out loud from the book Isaiah (Ac 8:28); Philip heard the official reading Isaiah (Ac 8:30); Philip asked if he understood (Ac 8:30); Ethiopian said he needed someone to explain (Ac 8:31); Philip began with the Scripture and spoke about Jesus (Ac 8:35).

Key-attitudes:

- Philip's readiness to obey God.
- Ethiopian's confusion when he didn't understand Isaiah.
- Philip's confidence in the gospel.
- Ethiopian's happiness after his baptism.

Initial-situation:

The number of believers grew among both Hebrew-speaking and Greek-speaking Jews. The church's first conflict was when Greek-speaking Jewish believers complained because Greek-speaking widows were being neglected each day when food was distributed. The church chose seven men with Greek names to distribute the food to the widows. Among the chosen were Stephen and Philip. Stephen became the church's first martyr. Saul tried to destroy the church by jailing believers. Philip fled to Samaria, and told the Samaritans about Jesus. Many became believers.

Initial-problem:

An angel told Philip, "Go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Final-situation:

Philip traveled throughout the area, preaching in all the towns.

BIBLE STORY

An angel told Philip, "Go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Philip went. On the road, Philip met an Ethiopian official who was in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia. The official was a eunuch. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship. On his way home he sat in his chariot reading out loud the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the official reading out loud from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

The Ethiopian official answered, "How can I understand, unless someone explains it to me?" The Ethiopian invited Philip to sit in the chariot with him.

The Ethiopian was reading this passage of Scripture, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. As a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

The Ethiopian asked Philip, "Who's the prophet talking about? Is the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" Philip began with that passage of Scripture and told the Ethiopian the Good News about Jesus.

They traveled along the road and came to some water. The Ethiopian said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" The Ethiopian ordered, "Stop the chariot!" Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water and Philip baptized him. They stepped out of the water and the Lord's Spirit suddenly took Philip away. The Ethiopian joyfully continued on his way; he never saw Philip again. But Philip traveled throughout the area, preaching in all the towns until he reached Caesarea (Ac 8:26-40).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Philip encounter the Ethiopian, and what happened?
2. How can you imitate Philip and help others believe in Jesus?
3. How did God set up the opportunity for Philip to witness?
4. The Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53. Read Isaiah 53:7-8 and share ways the text describes Jesus.
5. Philip spoke to Samaritans who were social outcasts and the Ethiopian official who was in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians. Why do both the poor and the rich need to hear about Jesus?
6. The Ethiopian was a eunuch; he had been castrated. He would neither be allowed in a Jewish synagogue nor in the temple. What does this tell us about God's desire to evangelize people against whom we have prejudice?
7. What did God do to prepare the Ethiopian for the gospel message?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The Holy Spirit guides individuals to evangelize others.** The Holy Spirit guided Philip to evangelize the Ethiopian official (Ac 8:29).
2. **Ministry to both a crowd and to an individual are important.** Philip used both of these methods. In Samaria, he preached in public (Ac 8:5-8); on the road to Gaza, he practiced personal evangelism (Ac 8:26-29). After witnessing to the Ethiopian, Philip traveled through towns preaching the Good News (8:40).
3. **Baptism is a means by which a person publicly professes that he has accepted the gospel.** Before his ascension, Jesus ordered his disciples to make disciples of all nations, and to baptize those who became his disciple (Mat 28:19; Mk 16:15-16). The primitive church obeyed that order, beginning on the day of Pentecost. New believers were immediately baptized (Ac 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:14-15, 32-33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:13-16). Samaritans were baptized as soon as they accepted the gospel (Ac 8:12). The Ethiopian official wanted to be baptized immediately (Ac 8:38).
4. **The Bible should be used to inform people about Jesus.** Philip's question and the Ethiopian's answer imply the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip began with that passage of Scripture and told the Ethiopian the Good News about Jesus (Ac 8:35). This implies that Philip also used other Old Testament Scripture.
5. **The gospel needs to be shared to people of all social classes.** Philip spoke to Samaritans who were social outcasts and the Ethiopian official who was in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians. Both the poor and the rich need to hear about Jesus.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Interactive Sharing:

Invite listeners to share a "Gaza Road" experience where they shared the gospel in an unusual way, or someone shared the gospel with them in an unusual way.