

Ethiopian Eunuch Baptized

by Shawn Nolt

FAITH STORY:

Acts 8:26-40

FAITH FOCUS:

In this story, Philip is led by an angel of the Lord to a wilderness road, where he comes upon an Ethiopian eunuch. The Ethiopian eunuch had come to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way home, and was in his chariot reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip was prompted by the Spirit to go over to the chariot, and overheard the eunuch reading. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch replied that he did not, and asked Philip to join him and explain who the passage was speaking about. Philip began with the passage in Isaiah proclaiming to him the good news about Jesus. As they continued down the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch asked to be baptized. Philip baptized him and the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Philip found himself at Azotus. He proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will be able to:

- Identify the “Ethiopian eunuchs” in their community
- List 3 ways of sharing the gospel with unlikely people
- Identify people that they are hesitant to share Christ with
- State the importance of this story in relation to the Great Commission in Acts 1:8

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Bibles
- Pencils and Paper
- Make at least 4 copies of scripts for skit
- Set up 2 chairs for skit
- Make a card of questions for each group from **Explore the Bible**

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

After everyone has gathered, play a game of “yes, no, I don’t know”. Tell the students to move to one side of the room for “yes” answers, the other side of the room for “no” answers, and to the center of the room for “I don’t know” answers. Ask these questions and give time for movement:

- Do you know anybody that comes from a different country than you, or speaks a language other than English?
- Have you ever met someone who you found it hard to relate to?
- Do you find it hard to relate to people of different cultures or ethnic groups?
- Do you find it hard to relate to people of different economic backgrounds from your own?
- Do you find it hard to relate to people who have radically different faith beliefs from yours?
- Have you ever been surprised when you found that you could relate to a person different than yourself?
- Have you ever been put in a situation where you had to rely on someone else to explain something to you?”

CONNECT:

Gather the students back to their seats and discuss their answers.

Transition statement

Do you think anyone in the Bible ever struggled with ethnic or class issues?

Allow students to share examples they can recall from the Bible, then move into the Bible story.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Assign actors and perform the skit found at the end of the lesson.

After the skit, divide the students into small groups. Each group needs a Bible and writing materials. Give each group a prepared card with the questions below:

Read Acts 8:26-40 in your group, and then respond to the following questions.

- 1 What is the question that the Ethiopian eunuch asks in Acts 8:34?
- 2 What do you think Philip's answer was to the question?
- 3 In your own words, what is the "good news about Jesus" that Philip shared with him?
- 4 Why do you think the eunuch asked to be baptized by Philip?

Have each group report back on their responses to the questions.

Summarize with these points:

- The Jews thought that being God's chosen people meant that they were the only ones that God was concerned about and wanted to save. Ask "How does our story challenge that thought?" (Their chosenness meant that they were set apart for a mission; through the Jews the whole world would receive the blessing of salvation.)
- God showed the early Church that the good news was for all people, not just Jews. Ask "What do we know about the Ethiopian eunuch that emphasizes this point?" (He was a gentile from Ethiopia.)
- God led one of his disciples to an unlikely person in an unlikely place, who was ready to receive the gospel. Ask "Can anyone summarize the important details that make this an unlikely encounter?" (A wealthy Ethiopian eunuch is traveling on a deserted road, reading from Isaiah. Philip is lead by God to approach the man, and a theological discussion ensues that leads to sharing the good news of Jesus, and a baptism.)

APPLY:

Divide the students into small groups and have them come up with a list of 3 specific ideas on how to share the good news about Jesus with the "unlikely people" in their school and community.

Have each group come up with a bumper sticker slogan that will help them remember this story.

RESPOND:

Ask students to reflect on the following:

- What changes am I going to make in my actions, based on God's desire that all come to Jesus?
- Who do I need to intentionally begin a conversation with this week?
- What specific steps can I take to expand my community awareness?

- What specific steps can I take to relate to people who don't know Christ?

Instruct the students to close their eyes as you pray this prayer, pausing for reflection between each line:

"Dear God, thank you for making each one of us unique in your image.

Please forgive us when we haven't shown kindness to people that are different from ourselves.

Please forgive us when we have avoided those that make us uncomfortable.

Reveal to me an opportunity to show kindness to someone this week.

Lead me to a person that you are preparing to hear the gospel.

Amen."

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

Definition of an Ethiopian eunuch: The chief officer or prime minister of state of the Candace, queen of Ethiopia. A high political position. Typically castrated to become appropriate to serve the queen, or the king's harem.

Our story happens soon after the first martyr, Stephen was stoned to death. Acts 8:1 tells us that a severe persecution began and the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. Philip, a disciple of Jesus, ended up in Samaria, and proclaimed the good news of Jesus there. Many people believed and were baptized by Philip. Peter and John came to Samaria after hearing what God was doing through Philip there. Later Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, while Philip remained. Our story begins with Philip being called by an angel of God to a wilderness road where he encounters the Ethiopian eunuch. For the early Christians, the eunuch would have been one of the first non-Jews to receive the salvation of Christ, and fulfilling Christ's "Great Commission" to go into all the nations; making disciples and baptizing them.

Had this man been saved in Jerusalem, it might have been looked upon as a kind of fluke, an exception. But this man was being sought by God. Here, in the midst of a Samaritan revival, and before the accounts of wide-spread evangelism of Jews or Gentiles, this Gentile was sought and saved by God, a kind of example of that which was to come. God wanted to expand the early Christians' understanding that the good news of Jesus Christ was for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Session Reproducibles

SKIT

By Shawn Nolt

ACTORS:

Angel

Philip

Ethiopian eunuch

Others (2-5 people)

PROPS:

Two chairs

Bible

STAGE:

Two chairs side by side on one side of stage. Ethiopian eunuch sitting in one chair. On opposite side of stage, Philip is standing in front of others who are standing.

Scene 1 — Philip preaching to people from Samaria, and baptizing them.

Philip: "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."

Others: "We believe!" (Others come forward and are baptized by Philip.)

(Then they go sit down in their seats, while Philip remains standing.)

Scene 2 — Angel comes to Philip and sends him to Wilderness road.

Angel: "Go south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Philip: (Philip shrugs shoulders, then says)

"OK"

Session Reproducibles

Scene 3 — Philip overhears the eunuch reading and joins him.

(Philip walks over toward the eunuch sitting in his chariot.)

Eunuch: (reading out loud from his Bible)

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

Philip: “Do you understand what you are reading?”

Eunuch: “How can I, unless someone guides me?”

(Philip sits down beside the eunuch and excitedly gestures and points at the Bible as if explaining it)

After 10-15 seconds the eunuch looks to his side as if noticing water.

“Look, here’s water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”

(They jump out of the chariot, and Philip baptizes him)

(Philip runs off stage celebrating)

(The eunuch returns to his chariot celebrating)