

STUDY GUIDE:

Foundations - Acts 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Welcome back to our journey through Acts.

For Starters: (keep this starter short)

Think back into your week. What was the best discussion, the most heart-to-heart-sharing-life conversation you had? Where was it and how did it happen?

Getting into some Bible:

Before we read our Acts 8 passage, let's go to the introduction of one of our main characters, Philip. The community of believers is growing fast and it's a bit overwhelming. The apostles need help, and Philip is brought in as a table-waiter for food dispersement with six others. Yes, Philip is a table waiter. However, violent persecution against Christians breaks out in Acts 7, and in Acts 8 the 'church' is now scattered, fleeing for their lives. Acts 8:4 reports that *"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."*

- Apostle means "a sent messenger"... who are the 'apostles' now?
- How do you think Philip and the other scattered believers feel about all this?

Ethiopians, Eunuchs, and Strange Encounters that God gets us into:

You're about to read a great story in Acts 8.

Listen for how God leads Philip. How does Philip respond to the different ways that God talks to him (each time it's different by the way)?

For Philip, a more strange 'stranger' couldn't have been found (a different race, different culture, different gender identity)... who would be your strange stranger?

Would you sit in a bench with them and share about faith, love, and Jesus?

Read Acts 8:26-40

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Philip respond to the different ways that God talks to him (each time it's different by the way)? How does the Holy spirit lead you?
2. Major boundary breaker: For Philip, a more strange 'stranger' couldn't have been found (a different race, different culture, different than normal gender identity)... who would be your strange stranger?
Would you sit in a bench with them and share about life, faith, love, and Jesus?
What does this mean for the church today?
3. "It is not our *ability*, it is our *availability* that God uses". Here a table-waiter lives as an apostle. In all the grandeur of this story, the purpose was as ordinary as sitting on a bench and talking. How does this challenge you in your day?

Perspectives, Commonalities, and Life Stories intersect at the Gospel:

Deuteronomy 23:1 and Leviticus 21 tell us a couple things about Jerusalem's perspective on gentiles and eunuchs. They aren't allowed in the assembly (community of faith), they are not holy enough to be in the presence of a Holy God. Here's the beauty: Leviticus says to the deformed and imperfect, "the Lord will make you Holy" (Lev. 21:23). What? How? The Savior. When Jesus says that he came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, he is saying that He is our answer to be in the presence of God. Jesus makes us holy by giving his holy and perfect life for ours... because we couldn't be perfect on our own.

Read Acts 8:32-33

Pause here. Think about how this Isaiah text connected to this Ethiopian eunuch. Think about his life story. He was as gentile and foreign as you get in Jerusalem. In his very own life he was led to the shearers. He knew humiliation, discrimination, and being deprived of justice. He knew about being despised and how ordinary people wouldn't even look at him on the streets (or they would look and whisper). He knew that he too would have no descendants, and he didn't fit into ordinary life. Can you understand now why the Ethiopian was wondering if Isaiah the Prophet might be talking about himself?

Acts 8:34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

The good news of Jesus is that He is the Messiah, the savior, that fulfilled Isaiah 53. He is the one that heals the wounds that you cannot get healed. He is the one that makes you Holy when your own effort always falls short. **Read Isaiah 53:3-6** (the text that the Ethiopian just read before Philip jumped in).

- How does the Ethiopian relate to this story? Does Jesus relate to the Ethiopian?
- Is the power of the Gospel in the fact that Jesus relates to each of us?
- How is this message relevant to you?
- Where is Acts 8:37? Hmm... mystery... look at the footnote in your bible. What did the Ethiopian have to simply believe?
- The man believes in Jesus and wants to get baptized. Have you been baptized? Is there anything keeping you from getting baptized today? Philip would say no. BTW.. there's a fountain in the courtyard at church ;)

The Unpredictable Outcome of Sharing Life on a Bench

This is the power of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus that was open for anyone that would believe. The free gift of grace and love that previous outsiders felt more deeply than anyone else. This all happened in a bench.

God leads us to people, conversations, and the Holy Spirit makes miracles happen. Lives are changed in the midst of conversations about God's love. Any place you sit, any place you journey, it's sacred space. The Holy Spirit is with you. It is not your ability, but your availability that matters — Both to be used by God for others, and to hear the very love of Jesus Christ for you.

May God's grace and peace be with you on your journey, along the road, in your adventure. May you be awake, available, and listening.

CLOSE IN PRAYER