

Philip Helps a Traveler | Acts 8:26-40

Chapter 8 of Acts begins with a persecution of the followers of Jesus following the stoning of a Greek man named Stephen, who had become a deacon of the followers of The Way. Saul (who later became Paul, the transformed Apostle of Jesus), began “to destroy the church.” (Acts 8. 3 NIV) In response, believers scattered throughout the region to escape from him.

Philip, who was one of the Greek deacons who served the Greek believers, went to a city in Samaria first and through healings and preaching converted many of the people in that city. From there, Philip was called to travel toward the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is where our story takes place. (Note that throughout history this Philip in Acts 8 has been confused with the disciple Philip, but in fact they are two different people).

The treasurer of the Queen Mother of the Ethiopians was traveling back to his home country (south of Egypt) after a time of worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. His travel path brought him to the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea (what we now call the Gaza Strip). As a Gentile God-fearer, this Ethiopian would have been permitted to worship in the Court of the Gentiles, which was outside the Temple proper, but inside the Temple walls.

In reading this story, I wondered how the Ethiopian was able to obtain the scroll of Isaiah. Perhaps his title allowed him the financial resources to own a scroll, something that only the wealthy could afford. According to *pathoes.com* a standard roll of papyrus would cost an ordinary worker 4-8 days’ pay. The scroll of Isaiah was larger than most and took 30 hours or more to complete; the cost being more than 10 denarii (or 45 grams of silver) in the Roman marketplace.

The passage that the Ethiopian was reading can be found in chapter 53 of Isaiah. Philip helped this new believer understand that Isaiah was talking about Jesus. Philip baptized the man, fulfilling two of the commands Jesus gave in the Great Commission, teaching and baptizing (Matthew 28:16-20).

Children may be fascinated by the way the Holy Spirit guides Philip. There is an element of mystery here as Philip is “whisked away” following the baptism of the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian rejoices as he continues his trip home.

Scripture tells us that Philip reappeared about 19 miles away and then traveled north to Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea.

Learning Together:

Create a Rhythm for Your Family Worship/Learning Time.

Gather together, light a candle to remind you that Jesus is the light of the world and whoever follows him will not walk in the dark, but have the light of life (John 8:12).

Read together Acts 8:26-40 from any story bible or easy to understand translation you own. Or listen to the story from *Growing in God's Love*. This story is not in the *Read and Learn Bible*.

Talk about the story:

- I wonder why the Ethiopian chose to read the scroll of Isaiah?
- I wonder what surprises you about this passage?
- I wonder what questions this story brings to your mind?
- I wonder how the Ethiopian's life changed after he believed in Jesus and was baptized?
- I wonder how your life is different because you believe in Jesus as your Savior?
- I wonder who shares the Good News with you?

Close your worship time with prayer, asking a family member to pray for your family. Change the light of your candle, catching the smoke in the snuffer. Lift the snuffer and remind family members that God is with them always and everywhere they are.

Family Activities

1. Retell this story in a round-robin way:

One person begins the story and tells a piece of it. The next family member picks up the story and tells the next part of the story. Continue in this way until everyone has had a chance to tell a piece of the story or until the story is complete. If your family enjoyed this activity, do it again, telling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. (Parent note: this is a good way to check to see if your child knows some of the major stories of our faith. You can fill in details important to the faith story if your child is missing some of them.)

2. Create a Scroll:

Take a long piece of paper (or tape several 8.5x11 papers together) and attach dowel rods to each end with tape. Invite one of your family members to write selected verses of Isaiah 53 on the inside of the "scroll" to remind you of Jesus, the suffering servant. Then starting at each end, roll the paper onto the dowel rods until dowel rods meet. Invite family members to take time unrolling the scroll to read the words that Philip and the Ethiopian read together.

3. Use your senses: (a Bible study technique)

Invite family members to listen to the story again, this time listening for what Philip might have seen, tasted, heard, touched, or smelled. Invite family members to use their imagination as they share what senses Philip might have used.

Activities for Older Children:

1. Map Study with Salt Dough:

Use a map from your Bible or Google "Bible Map of Philips' journeys." Create a salt dough map of the area and mark the travels of Philip.

[Salt dough recipe](#)

Once you and your child create the salt dough, give them a piece of cardboard onto which they can roll out or pat the dough into a 1 inch thick square or rectangle of dough.

Let it harden then using permanent markers, help children put on their "map" all the places noted in this story! Some Bibles have a map of the early travels of the Apostles. Use a map like that for a reference.

Invite children to color their map according to the geography of the land (example, color mountainous areas green and desert areas brown).

2. Read about and write a letter to a missionary:

Philip was a missionary to the people of Samaria and then to the Ethiopian.

Check out stories about some Presbyterian missionaries here:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/mission-connections/>

Or read about a missionary serving in Ethiopia and the work they are doing today. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/ethiopia/>

Activities for Younger Children:

1. Water play.

The Ethiopian and Philip went into the water so the Ethiopian could be baptized. Invite your child to play in water and help them remember their baptism (if they have been baptized). It can be as simple as saying "When you were baptized the pastor put water drops on your head like this" (illustrate).

Tell your child the story of their baptism, sharing who was there, what happened that day, and sharing any pictures you have of that special day. If your child is not yet baptized, you can talk about looking forward to that day.

2. Create a Scroll:

Tape 3 pieces of copy paper together end to end. Provide crayons, or other art materials. Invite your child to create a river scene on the paper. When they are done, you can roll it into a scroll or tape it to a wall to help you remember that the Ethiopian was baptized because he believed in Jesus.

3. Sing a Song:

Sing this song with your child to the tune of *Frere Jacques*.

I believe (repeat)

Yes I do (repeat)

I believe in Jesus (repeat)

You can too. (repeat)

Faith Practice:

The Ethiopian was grateful to Philip for telling him about Jesus. Our Scripture tells us that he went on his way rejoicing. Rejoicing is a form of saying we are grateful.

Grateful walking: <https://www.crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject/gratitude/practicing-gratitude-family>

- **If you live in an urban location, walk around your neighborhood** and try to think of a new thing or person to be grateful for every time you turn a corner.
- **Walk in a park or woods** and note all the different kinds of plants. Thank God for the infinite variety of God's beautiful creation.
- **When your congregation is meeting together physically, park a few blocks from your church building and walk the rest of the way.** Use the time to talk about things you are grateful for and to prepare your hearts to worship God from a posture of thankfulness.

Worship Emphasis: Beginning Prayers

Choose a new bedtime or dinner prayer to say with your child. Milestones 2 and 3 offered prayers to do with your child or begin asking your child to finish a "Thank you" sentence prayer. Children two and older can tell you something they are thankful for. To begin the process, invite them to name a favorite food for which to thank God (good at dinner time). Or ask them to name someone they want to tell God thank you for (good for bedtime prayers)

"Thank you God for _____"

Worship Emphasis: Lord's Prayer

Just as a hand has five fingers there are five sections to the Lord's Prayer. Lead your child through the reciting of the Lord's Prayer while using the five fingers to track each of the sections of the prayer.

THUMB: Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

INDEX finger: Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

MIDDLE finger: Give us this day our daily bread.

RING finger: and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

PINKIE: and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.