

Philip Tells the Ethiopian About Jesus

Acts 8:26-40

Philip was a deacon, chosen by the apostles to help with ministry in the early church. He had gone to Samaria and established a wonderful ministry there. According to Acts 8:4-8, Philip was preaching Christ, healing people, and bringing great joy to a Samaritan city. But God had another plan for Philip, which included guiding the first non-Jew to faith in Jesus and resulted in Christianity being taken to Ethiopia.

Since the Ethiopian eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, we can assume he knew something of the Jewish faith. He may have been quite fully committed to the faith because he had traveled quite a distance to worship, perhaps as far as 200 miles! He had likely been inspired by his time of worship, because he was reading from Isaiah as he rode along. We might find it strange that Philip could hear what he was reading, but it was common in ancient times to read aloud. In fact, the language was such that sounding out the words was almost necessary.

Notice that at the Holy Spirit's prompting, Philip overcame not only any fears or questions about non-Jews becoming Christians, but also any racial prejudice he may have had. God is not concerned with the color of our skin, and neither was Philip.

Philip had no difficulty answering the Ethiopian's questions. He had probably been answering the same types of questions from the Samaritans. God had prepared the right person to present the gospel to the Ethiopian on the road.

When Philip told the man about Jesus, the Ethiopian apparently expressed belief immediately. Baptism was taken very seriously in the early church. Philip must have been fully convinced of the certainty and sincerity of the Ethiopian's belief, because he consented to baptize this traveler.

Having completed his task, Philip was again sent on his way by God. The text seems to indicate that God miraculously swept him away, on to his next mission. The Ethiopian continued on his way, and tradition tells us that he spread the message of Christ in Ethiopia, soon baptizing the queen and others there.

We often don't know why God guides us to do certain things. But when we know what God wants us to do, we must respond in faith and action. Philip's actions opened Christianity to non-Jews, and if we accept tradition as true, they also resulted in many Ethiopians following Christ. Who knows what God will do through us if we respond faithfully to the guidance of his Holy Spirit?

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: It's natural to turn to friends for advice. Through your friendship with Jesus, you can get the ultimate "advice" and guidance. Jesus' leading is *always* worth following.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: When have you felt that still, small voice prompting you to say something or do something? How did you respond? It's tempting to explain away those nudgings from the Holy Spirit without following them. But what if Philip had done the same thing? This week resolve to listen more closely to—and obey immediately—the directions God lays on your heart.