



## LESSON 31

*Philip shares the gospel with the Ethiopian*

ACTS 8:26-40



**The Holy Spirit proclaims Jesus through obedient servants.**



***“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35).***

## Supporting Truths

1. The Holy Spirit leads people to Jesus.
2. The Holy Spirit uses submissive servants.
3. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture.
4. The Holy Spirit reveals Himself to those who sincerely seek God.
5. The Holy Spirit produces the joy of salvation.

## Objectives

1. State who guided Philip to the Ethiopian.
2. Describe Philip’s response to the angel and the Spirit.
3. Cite the Scripture the Ethiopian was reading.
4. Explain why the Ethiopian had been in Jerusalem.
5. Describe the Ethiopian’s response to Philip.

# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

*Philip shares the gospel with the Ethiopian • Acts 8:26-40*



## Lesson Summary

After Philip opened up Samaria to the gospel, the Spirit sent him south, to a road few people traveled. This seemed strange, but Philip obeyed immediately. Because Philip obeyed, the Spirit guided him straight to someone who was seeking God, an important Ethiopian official. Then the Spirit used Scripture and Philip's explanation to bring the Ethiopian to Jesus. He was baptized and continued on his way full of joy, while the Spirit gave Philip yet another mission.

## Spotlight on the Gospel

This story shows what the gospel is, how it spreads, and how it changes people. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died in the place of sinners. The gospel spreads by the power of the Holy Spirit as He uses obedient Christians to show people Jesus. Then the gospel changes everyone who sincerely seeks God. It unites them to Jesus, fills them with joy, and gives them a mission to go tell others.

LAST WEEK



**The Church is persecuted  
and the gospel spreads**  
*Acts 8:1-25*

THIS WEEK



**Philip shares the gospel  
with the Ethiopian**  
*Acts 8:26-40*

NEXT WEEK



**Saul is converted**  
*Acts 9:1-31*

THE GOSPEL SPREADS INTO JUDEA AND SAMARIA

## Lesson Commentary

### *The Holy Spirit proclaims Jesus through obedient servants.*

Christians are people with a mission to tell others how great Jesus is. But this can seem like a daunting task and sometimes we give up before we begin. To encourage us, Acts 8 reminds that we are not limited by our own creativity or ability. As in the entire book of Acts, the Holy Spirit is the one who directs and empowers all testimony to Jesus on earth. It is our part to do as Philip did: follow the Spirit's lead and be ready to use Scripture to show people Jesus.

#### Philip obeyed the Spirit (8:26–30)

Philip had been north of Jerusalem, in Samaria, but now an angel commanded him to go south (Acts 8:26). That was a strange command. Why should Philip leave what he began in Samaria? And even if he had to go south to Gaza, why go by the less traveled road through dry hills instead of the more common one along the sea? But the strangeness of the command did not stop Philip. He got up and went (8:27). Because Philip was so obedient, he would have great success in completing his mission as a Christian (Josh 1:8).

It is a good thing he obeyed, because an unexpected person was there: an Ethiopian official (Acts 8:27). Ethiopia was south of Egypt, and to people in the Roman empire, it was the edge of the known world. Therefore it was strange to find an Ethiopian near Jerusalem. Even more strange, this was not just any Ethiopian. He was the Secretary of the Treasury, in charge of all the finances. More importantly, he was sincerely seeking God (8:28). He had come to worship at the temple, although he probably did not

find what he had hoped. Much of temple worship at that time was corrupt, and besides, the Ethiopian would not have been allowed to participate because he was a eunuch (Deut 23:1). Still,

he kept seeking. He had purchased a scroll of Isaiah, which would have been expensive, and he happened to be reading it right then.

Philip did not yet know who this man was or what he was reading. But again, the Spirit guided him, and Philip fully obeyed (Acts 8:29–30). This shows that the work of bringing people to Jesus is, first, a work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit begins the work and sees it through to the end (John 3:3; 16:7–14). Second, it is also the work of servants who obey the Spirit. If you want to accomplish your mission as a Christian, follow the Spirit's lead (Eph 5:18–19). Do this by trusting in His power in your life (Rom 8:2–14) and by letting His word—the Bible—fill and direct you (Col 3:16). As you do, the Spirit will use you to show Jesus to those who seek Him.

**THINK ABOUT IT**  
To what mission field have you been called?



#### Philip proclaimed Jesus (8:31–35)

The Spirit also uses Scripture as a key tool to bring people to Jesus. He had arranged it so that the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53, one of the fullest descriptions of the Messiah's suffering and death in the Old Testament. The Ethiopian read about someone who unjustly and silently suffered and died (Acts 8:32–33). But he could not figure out who the passage was about. Who is the "servant" (Isa 52:13; 53:11)? Some said it was about Isaiah. But the servant is someone who successfully restores Israel to God and brings salvation to all nations (49:6), and Isaiah did not do that. Others said it was someone else—the whole nation of Israel. After all, the servant is called "Israel" (49:3). But since the servant also restores Israel, he is only called Israel because he acts as a representative of Israel. Others said it was about the Messiah—but who was he?

Philip answered: it is about the Messiah, and the Messiah is Jesus (Acts 8:35). Jesus suffered and was despised (Isa 53:1–3; Mark 9:12). Jesus was a servant who gave His life for the sake of others



**THINK ABOUT IT**  
God will reveal Himself to anyone who sincerely seeks Him (Jer 29:13; Matt 7:7).

# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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(Isa 53:4–6; Mark 10:45). Jesus was truthful, silent, and submissive even while unjustly condemned (Isa 53:7–9; Matt 26:42; John 18:36–37). Jesus was killed with wicked men but was with a rich man in His death (Isa 53:9; Matt 27:38, 57–60). Jesus died as a guilt offering, yet by rising again He gained long life (Isa 53:10a; Mark 16:6). Finally, Jesus perfectly accomplished the Father’s will (Isa 53:10b; John 5:19). This is the gospel: Jesus is the Messiah who died to take away our sin (Isa 53:11–12; 2 Cor 5:21).

Philip probably pointed out things like these, but whatever else he talked about, two things are clear: he used Scripture and he explained Jesus. Can you do that? Are you so devoted to Jesus and His word that you are ready to give an answer to anyone who asks (1 Pet 3:15)? We all should witness like Philip did, because

faith comes by the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). As we will see with the Ethiopian, it is the word that causes people to be spiritually born again (1 Pet 1:23). Know the Bible and tell people what it says.



**THINK ABOUT IT**  
“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom 10:15)

## Philip’s testimony brought salvation (8:36–40)

Because of Philip’s explanation, the Ethiopian believed. He showed his faith by action when he asked to be baptized (Acts 8:36). Since the Ethiopian asked about baptism, Philip must have explained it as part of the gospel message. This shows that baptism is a high priority! Outwardly, *baptism* is immersion in water. But it is also a symbol of an inward reality. It is a sign of unity with Jesus (1 Cor 12:13). It is identifying with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection and committing to live as one who belongs to Jesus (Rom 6:1–4). It is also a sign of trusting God to wash away sin, kind of like how water washes away dirt (1 Pet 3:21). Since there was some water on the way, Philip baptized the man

(Acts 8:38). Because baptism is so important and is commanded (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38), every believer must be baptized—and should want to be baptized—if at all possible.

The Ethiopian’s faith is also clear in his attitude. The direction of his journey did not change, but his heart did! It turned from frustration and confusion to joy (Acts 8:39b). And of course, he rejoiced! He had found the answer he had longed for. He had found forgiveness for sins and salvation from death (Rom 8:1). He had found peace and righteousness (5:1). And best of all, he had found Jesus, his precious Savior and King (Luke 2:10–11). His joy showed that he belonged to Jesus, since Jesus came to put His joy in His followers (John 15:11). His joy also showed that he was now living by the Spirit, for joy is what the Spirit produces (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22).

With one mission accomplished, the next began. The Spirit never rests in bringing people to Jesus, and now He had two servants to work through, not just one. The Ethiopian carried his new faith back to the edge of the known world, and over the centuries Christianity spread in Ethiopia. As for Philip, the Spirit carried him off to Azotus (Ashdod), about 20 miles north of Gaza. From there Philip continued his mission up the coast until he came to Caesarea (Act 8:39–40). Perhaps this was his hometown before, but it definitely was from this point on. Twenty years later, he was still there, and by then he had four daughters. Considering the kind of man Philip was, it was fitting that God blessed him by making his daughters prophetesses (Acts 21:8–9)! From beginning to end, Philip put himself at the disposal of the Holy Spirit.

**THINK ABOUT IT**  
To be a Christian is to be a joyful person.



## Lesson Outline

*The Holy Spirit proclaims Jesus through obedient servants.*

### AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The Holy Spirit uses obedient Christians (8:26–30).
2. The Holy Spirit answers people who seek God (8:27b–28).
3. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible (8:31–35).
4. The Holy Spirit brings people to Jesus (8:35–38).
5. The Holy Spirit gives great joy (8:39–40).

### AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Philip obeyed the Spirit (8:26–30).
  - Philip obeyed the angel and went to a desert road (8:26–27a).
  - The Spirit brought Philip to someone seeking God (8:27b–28).
  - Philip obeyed the Spirit and went up to him (8:29–30).
2. Philip proclaimed Jesus (8:31–35).
  - The man asked who Isaiah 53 is about (8:31–34).
  - Philip used the Bible to tell him about Jesus (8:35).
3. Philip's testimony brought salvation (8:36–40).
  - The man eagerly chose to be baptized (8:36–38).
  - The man continued his journey with joy (8:39).
  - The Spirit sent Philip on a new mission (8:39–40).



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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## Lesson Questions

*Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.*



### Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who told Philip to go south?**  
An angel of the Lord.
- 2. Did Philip obey?**  
Yes.
- 3. Who did Philip find?**  
An Ethiopian who was seeking God.
- 4. What did Philip use to tell him about Jesus?**  
The Bible.



### Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was strange about the place where Philip was sent?**  
It was on the other side of Jerusalem from where Philip was. It was a less-used road.
- 2. What was unusual about the man Philip found there?**  
He was from Ethiopia. He was very powerful—the Treasurer. He was seeking God.
- 3. What was the Ethiopian reading?**  
He was reading Isaiah, specifically, Isaiah 53 which records Jesus suffering for others.
- 4. Who told Philip to go up to the man?**  
The Holy Spirit.
- 5. What did Philip explain?**  
Philip explained all about Jesus, starting with Isaiah 53.
- 6. What did the Ethiopian want to do?**  
He wanted to be baptized.
- 7. What is baptism?**  
Baptism is being immersed in water as an outward sign of an inward unity and loyalty to Jesus, and as a sign of trusting God to wash away sins.
- 8. What did the Ethiopian feel like afterward?**  
He was full of joy, because he had Jesus and the Spirit.

# Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

## WHAT IS MY MISSION?

Show the children pictures of people doing different jobs (teacher, policeman, doctor, soldier, coach, garbage man, carpenter, athlete, etc.). Ask the children what each person's "mission" in life is. Explain that a "mission" is a very important job that someone has been called to do. After showing the pictures, ask the children what the mission of a Christian is: telling other people about Jesus. In today's lesson, we will learn that Christians accomplish their mission through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## HOLY SPIRIT USES OBEDIENT CHRISTIANS

Most children know what it means to obey (follow directions). But do they know how we are supposed to obey? (1) Right away; (2) completely and exactly according to the directions; and (3) with a happy heart. This may seem hard at times, but this is what pleases God (Eph 6:1). In today's lesson, we're going to meet a man—Philip—who obeyed this way. As you listen to the lesson, raise your hand when you hear Philip obey in one of these ways: (1) completely and exactly according to directions (Acts 8:27, 30); (2) quickly (8:30); (3) with a happy heart (8:39–40).



ILLUSTRATE

## WHAT IS FOR LUNCH?

The passage of Scripture the Ethiopian was reading was Isaiah 53:7–8. This portion of Scripture is a prophecy of the Messiah that was to come. Do the children know what a "prophecy" is? It is information about something that has not happened yet. God told the prophet Isaiah about the one who would come and save His people many hundreds of years before He came. You may illustrate this by asking the children to tell you what they are going to have for lunch. While some may know what they are going to be eating today, what about tomorrow? Next week? Next year?

## GUIDED

The Holy Spirit guided Philip to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26, 29, 39–40). Illustrate this by leading the children around the room while their eyes are closed. Point out that they, like Philip, will need to obey your directions in order to get where they need to go.



APPLY

## ISAIAH'S SCROLL

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, tan construction paper, crayons, scissors, glue yarn.

**Directions:** Color the images, cut and glue them on the tan construction paper. Glue the verse at the bottom of the page. Roll the construction paper and close it using the yarn.

### Isaiah's Scroll

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

## LESSON CHECKLIST

That God planned to bring the Ethiopian to faith can be seen in how all the events come together in today's lesson. Illustrate this with a large checklist made out of poster board. This list should contain all the events that God planned in today's lesson: The Holy Spirit sending Philip south on a desert road (Acts 8:26); Philip meeting the Ethiopian (8:27); the Ethiopian reading an Isaiah passage regarding the Messiah (8:28); the chariot passing water in the middle of the dry land (8:36); and the Holy Spirit carrying Philip away (8:39). During the lesson, check off each event as it occurs.

## BEAUTIFUL FEET?

Normally when we think of beauty, we do not think of feet! Show pictures of feet (human or animal), and see if you can find anything beautiful about them. Yet the Bible talks about "beautiful feet." In the book of Romans we read: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (10:15; cf. Isa 52:7). What makes these feet so beautiful? The message of salvation that they carry to others! Today we're going to learn about someone with beautiful feet: Philip. His feet carried the gospel to an Ethiopian searching for God.



ILLUSTRATE

## PICK A SCROLL

Create a basket full of little "scrolls," papers rolled and tied with ribbon. Let each child pick a scroll. Only one scroll has writing on it, Acts 8:32–33. Whoever pulls that scroll gets to read it. Since the Ethiopian was a treasurer, for fun you could put the scrolls in a treasure box.

## BAPTISM

Show the children pictures or a short video of people being baptized. Explain that baptism is only for those who have trusted Jesus for salvation. It is not necessary for salvation. Baptism is a public demonstration of one's faith in Christ. It is a symbol of beginning the Christian life. Because of their profession of faith in Christ, they desire to identify themselves with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. The reason that Christians should be baptized is that both Christ and the apostles (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38) commanded them to. Not to be baptized after believing in Jesus Christ is a question of obedience before both God and Christ.



APPLY

## ROAD TO GAZA

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

**Directions:** Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color it with crayons. Glue the chariot to the "Road to Gaza" craft page. Glue the scroll with Ethiopian Eunuch. Cut the two dotted line at the bottom of the page to insert the Ethiopian and Philip.

Road to Gaza  
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

**FAST HELP**

Have you ever read something but were not able to understand it? Did you go to someone else to ask for help? Would it not be nice if someone came to help you before you even asked for help? Well, that is exactly what happens in today's lesson.

**MISSION: POSSIBLE**

Have any of the children heard of the series of spy thriller movies called Mission: Impossible? These movies feature a nearly impossible task which the protagonist must choose to accept: "Your mission, should you choose to accept it..." While this mission is supposedly "impossible," the spy is incredibly able to accomplish it with a mix of ingenuity, resources, timing, and execution. In contrast, each Christian has truly been given an impossible task: to bring other people to Jesus. However, while this mission is impossible in our own strength (Matt 19:26), God has given us the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit's power, what was otherwise impossible becomes possible.



ILLUSTRATE

**GOD THE SPIRIT**

The book of Acts shows the critical ministry of the Holy Spirit. However, it is possible that some children do not fully understand the nature of the Spirit. He is God (Acts 5:3–4), but He is also a person. He is not an impersonal force or energy, like the Force featured in the popular Star Wars movies. Scripture demonstrates the personhood of the Holy Spirit in the following ways: (1) Personal pronouns (John 14:17; 16:13), (2) His personal care of Christians (John 14:16, 26), (3) His intellect (1 Cor 2:11), (4) His feelings (Rom 8:27), (5) His will (1 Cor 12:11), (6) His speaking (Acts 13:2), (7) His convicting (John 16:8–11), (8) His interceding (Rom 8:26), (9) His guiding (John 16:13), (10) His glorifying Christ (John 16:14), and (11) His serving God (Acts 16:6–7).

**SNATCHED AWAY**

After baptizing the Ethiopian, Philip was carried away by the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:39). Philip was not the first in Scripture to be carried off in this way. Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11, 16) and Ezekiel (Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3) were also miraculously carried away.



APPLY

**THIS IS MY BIBLE**

As a Christian, it is critical that we know the Bible, especially the message of salvation it contains. We never know when God will give us an opportunity to share the good news of the gospel. To illustrate the importance of knowing your Bible, read the Rifleman's creed to the children. All Marines are required to memorize this creed. This creed rehearses the importance of the marine's rifle, a piece of equipment that is at the very center of everything a marine does. If the rifle is essential to a marine, how much more the Bible to a Christian!