

I hope this tract will assist you in your study of God's Word. I pray the story of Philip and the Ethiopian will inspire you to follow Jesus. Jesus died for your sins and I urge you to commit your life to him by being baptized. I pray you will spend your life telling others the Good News of Jesus.

If you have questions, or would like to be put in contact with a local congregation of God's people, please let me know.

- Steve Ridgell



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A STORY OF JESUS: LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

Steve Ridgell

The Good News of Jesus Christ is the most exciting story you will ever hear. It is told in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and it is told in the many stories of conversion found in the book of Acts. One of these stories is that of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch and is found in Acts 8:26-40.

I want to share this story with you and also help you understand how to study God's Word for yourself.

We will work right through the text, and at the conclusion I will share some principles of Bible study that have helped me.

If you do not have your own Bible, please write me and I would be glad to send you one. My address and contact information can be found below and on the back of this tract.

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3. Pay Attention to Every Word

It is easy to read through a passage and miss some of the real message by not thinking on every word. For instance, when Philip was told to go to the desert road, "he started out." There was no waiting, no hesitation, and no excuses. When he was told to go to the chariot, "Philip ran." He did not just obey, he *ran* to obey. What a great example for us. Then in Acts 8:40, Philip "appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel..." Wherever God placed Philip, he preached about Jesus.

4. Read Between the Lines

Learn to find the meaning in Scripture that is not stated. Let me give you some examples. It is not enough to be a good person who believes in God. The Ethiopian had traveled a long way to worship and he was reading his Bible. But he still had to hear the Good News of Jesus and respond to it. The Good News of Jesus includes baptism. I know this because after hearing the Good News of Jesus, the Ethiopian asked to be baptized. How did he know to do that? Baptism is important because the Spirit did not take Philip away until the Ethiopian was baptized. Baptism is immersion. The Ethiopian did not ask about baptism until he saw water. He and Philip went down into the water and, after the baptism, both came up out of the water. Those details would seem to fit immersion baptism.

5. Always Ask What You Can Learn from the Passage

I want to seek after Jesus like the Ethiopian. I want to be open to ministry like Philip. I want to obey God with enthusiasm like Philip. I want to be baptized like the Ethiopian. I want to tell the Good News of Jesus everywhere like Philip.

HOW DO I LEARN THESE LESSONS FOR MYSELF?

Here are some helpful hints for studying the Bible, and how they were used to study the story of Philip and the Ethiopian.

1. Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Ask yourself how each of the characters must have felt and see what you can learn from them. For example, how must Philip have felt after being asked to leave a thriving ministry to go to a desert road? This reminds me that God is in control and He knows best. God had a plan to evangelize Ethiopia, and it started with moving Philip. It also reminds me that my job is to obey, not to always understand. He excited was the Ethiopian to have someone tell him the Good News of Jesus? How many people are we going to encounter who are waiting for someone to tell them about Jesus? Or perhaps you have been waiting for this Good News.

2. Scripture Explains Scripture

The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. When Acts 8:35 says Philip told the Ethiopian the Good News of Jesus, how do you know what that Good News is? Look back to the passage from Isaiah 53 that was being read. Isaiah 53 talks about one who would be rejected by men, one who was familiar with suffering, and one who would take up our infirmities. He is one who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. By his wounds we would be healed. This is the Good News of Jesus: he paid the price for our sins when he died for us. The more you read and study the Bible, the more you will see how various passages give insight and understanding to other verses.

ACTS 8:26-40

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

‘He was lead like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from earth.’

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. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns, until he reached Caesarea.”

ACTS 8:26-28

In the first part of Acts 8, we see that Philip has left Jerusalem and traveled to Samaria to preach about Jesus. He has a very successful ministry with many conversions. An angel tells him to go to a desert road, and so he starts on his journey. He encounters an important official from Ethiopia; a man in charge of the treasury. This man has been to Jerusalem to worship, so he believes in God. As he travels, he is reading the book of Isaiah out of the Bible.

ACTS 8:29-31

The Holy Spirit tells Philip to go to the chariot, and he runs toward it. Philip hears the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah and asked him if he understands what he is reading. The Ethiopian invited Philip to join him and explain the Scriptures to him. Both of these men are eager to follow God. Philip leaves a successful ministry to obey God, and he runs to obey Him. The Ethiopian has made a long journey to worship, he is reading his Bible, and he is eager to understand it. God puts them together: a seeker and a preacher.

ACTS 8:32-35

When the Ethiopian wants to know who this Scripture is talking about, Philip tells him about Jesus. The passage refers to the death of Jesus (a sheep to the slaughter) for our sins (deprived of justice—he did not deserve to die). It also predicts the resurrection of Jesus (his life was taken from the earth). This is the Good News: that Jesus died for our sins, and that he was raised from the dead.

ACTS 8:36-38

As soon as they found water, the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized. The Good News of Jesus demands a response. Philip must have taught the Ethiopian that the response to Jesus was to be buried and raised with him in the act of baptism. So they both went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Your response to the Good News of Jesus today is to be baptized just like the Ethiopian.

ACTS 8:39-40

After baptizing the Ethiopian, Philip was taken away by the Spirit. He stayed with the Ethiopian until he responded to Jesus. It is not enough to just know about Jesus, you must respond to him. When Philip was dropped at Azotus, he just continued preaching about Jesus. Wherever you find yourself, tell others about Jesus.