

ACTS 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Memory Verse

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus."

Acts 8:35

Real-life Problems

Looking for Fulfillment—In this passage, the eunuch seems to be characterized by zeal for, and joy in, God. Even though he doesn't quite understand what he reads in Isaiah, he knows that it's wonderful. After Genesis 3, all Christians want to be like the eunuch and find their fulfillment ultimately in God, but we often fail on this count. We find our fulfillment (or try to) in things like success, money, and relationships instead of the only one who will never change or go away—God.

The Good News

Money, power, success, grades, college admissions, and the like are all cruel masters. They are gods which are never satisfied with our sacrifices. We will never find ultimate satisfaction in them. God has saved us from our guilt and sin, yes, but He's done so much more than that. He's given us Himself, our heart's deepest desire, so that, just like the eunuch, we can approach even the difficult seasons of life with joy.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: Have you ever been to a waterpark? If so, what was your favorite ride?

Idea #2: When was the last time, maybe in a class or while you were reading a book, that you came across something you didn't understand? Did someone have to explain it to you, or were you able to figure it out on your own?

Idea #3: What are the two or three things in your life that you're most excited or passionate about?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's undeserved love for sinners

REVIEW

1) Who wrote the book of Acts?

Luke wrote Acts as a history of the earliest days of the church.

2) Who was the original audience of this book?

The original audience of Luke, narrowly speaking, is Theophilus. More broadly, though, Luke has written Acts with elements that appeal to both Jew and Greek, so the ultimate audience appears to be any Christian from any ethnicity.

3) Why was the book of Acts written?

The book of Acts was written to record the works of God in the early church.

What's going on?

REMIND

Because God has only ever shown Himself faithful, we can trust Him to provide for us even in seasons of darkness or doubt.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) About the interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.
- 2) How God reveals Himself in His Word.
- 3) How we can, like the eunuch, find joy in God's Word.

Read

Read **Acts 8:26-40** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) Why does Philip start heading south on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26)?

Philip heads south because an angel of the Lord tells him to.

2) Whom does Philip meet there (v. 27)?

He meets an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, the Ethiopian queen.

NOTE: A eunuch was a male high court official (also mentioned in Esther 1:10, 4:4, and Daniel 1:9) who had been castrated for the sake of their service to the king or queen. Eunuchs were castrated so that they wouldn't encroach on the king's royal harem and so they wouldn't overthrow the king they served, as they would be incapable of starting a dynasty of their own. Use some wisdom in how you talk about this with your students. Certainly don't avoid something the Bible makes plain, but know your audience and whether they're ready to speak about this at some length.

3) Why was the eunuch headed to Jerusalem? What is he doing when Philip finds him?

Verse 27 says that the eunuch was headed to Jerusalem to worship. When Philip finds him the eunuch is reading "Isaiah the prophet."

4) Why does Philip approach the eunuch (v. 29)? What does he ask the eunuch (v. 30)? How does the eunuch respond to Philip (v. 31)?

Philip approaches the eunuch because the Spirit tells him to. He asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading, and the eunuch says, "How can I unless someone guides me?"

5) The eunuch asks whom the prophet is talking about in the text. How does Philip respond (vv. 35-36)?

Philip tells him the good news about Jesus, beginning with the Scripture.

6) What happens next, specifically when the eunuch sees some water along the way (v. 37)?

The eunuch asks to be baptized!

7) What happens to both Philip and the eunuch at the end of the passage, in verses 39 and 40?

Philip is carried away by the Spirit of the Lord, and he preaches the gospel from Azotus to Caesarea. The eunuch "went on his way rejoicing."

B. SO WHAT?

1) Reread verses 30-36. Is there anything that jumps out to you about how the eunuch approaches the biblical text? If so, what is it and why?

The eunuch seems to wrestle with the text. He comes to a passage he doesn't quite understand, but he doesn't simply put it away and give up. He keeps trying to put the pieces together and wrap his mind around it as much as he can. What's more, he's not afraid to ask questions of the text, and to take those questions to someone who would be able to answer them, namely Philip.

2) Read what the eunuch says in verse 36. How would you describe his mood or tone in this verse?

The eunuch at the very least seems to be excited and eager to mark his entry into God's family with the sign of baptism. The eunuch doesn't begrudgingly approach the water, but asks Philip in a striking way why he couldn't be baptized right then. In many Bible translations, there is an exclamation point following the eunuch's statement, "there is water!" This should alert us that the eunuch can't wait to take the next step in his journey with the Lord.

3) Read verse 39. Here, we see that the eunuch went away rejoicing. Why do you think the eunuch was so joyful?

Answers might vary here, but really press into the fact that the eunuch—now understanding the gospel freshly—has new life. What's more, as a court official who's high up in the Ethiopian government, each part of his life is probably shot through with immense pressure to perform and to perform well. Here, finally, is the gospel, which doesn't command him to "do something," but rather tells him Jesus has "done everything" for him.

4) How do Philip's actions in this passage show that his primary concern is with the Lord and His work?

The key element here is that, in pretty much every instance, Philip is acting at the Lord's prompting. He goes down the road toward Gaza, a desert place, which was probably quite dangerous. Next, at the Spirit's prompting, he approaches a complete stranger who is much more powerful than he is. After that, the Spirit pulls him away to another mission for God's kingdom. Instead of shutting down at just how crazy this situation is, he continues to do the Lord's work by preaching all the way to Caesarea.

5) What do you notice about God's involvement in this passage? What does this tell you about God and the way He works?

God is the first mover of this passage from beginning to end. God is the one prompting Philip to go where he needs to go. He's the one pulling Philip away after his work is done with the eunuch. He's the one who put Philip and the eunuch on a road next to a body of water where the baptism might take place. And He's one who supplied the eunuch, indirectly, with a copy of Isaiah to read.

C. NOW WHAT?

1) Whom do you relate to more in this passage, Philip or the eunuch? Why?

Answers might vary, but make sure your students know that it's okay to relate to both. There might be times when we feel more like Philip, moving in step with the Spirit and doing what He asks of us. There might be other times when we're like the eunuch as we learn new things about God and passionately approach His Word. And, honestly, there will be times when we can't relate to either of them. Because of our own sin or God's providence, we may feel far from the Lord for a season during which He might be asking us to walk faithfully with Him, even when we can't directly see Him working in our lives.

2) Philip and the eunuch both show a real passion for God's word. Do you feel this same passion for God and His Word? Why or why not?

Answers might vary. Obviously, the hope for our students is that the answer is yes, but the fact is that even for mature Christians, there will be days when we're not feeling incredibly passionate about God and His Word. It will be the same for your students in certain seasons. This is not a good thing to be encouraged, but it is a fact of living in a world defined by sin and finitude. That being said, we want to acknowledge that it's the case and that, while it's not a good thing, it is a normal way that God works in us—to allow us to go through seasons where we don't feel incredible zeal to meet Him in His Word. It also might be worth mentioning, depending on your context, that there could be a number of reasons we might lack passion for God's Word in a given season. This could be because God has decided not to supply

us with that passion for a period of time (even though we might not know why), or it could be because of something else—perhaps some sin in our lives. It might be worth asking your students why they sometimes lack a desire to engage God in His Word.

Tom Brady on 60 Minutes

When Tom Brady, a man who went on to win more Super Bowls than any one NFL franchise, was interviewed on 60 Minutes in 2005, he told Steve Kroft, his interviewer, that retirement was the thing that scared him the most. Here's Brady in his own words: "And when that's done, you don't have 80,000 people screaming your name. What's it gonna be? I mean, I don't know, I've heard a lot about astronauts who go to the moon and come back and they're so depressed because there's nothing they can do in their lives that ever can fill in the way that that does."

Tom Brady had an incredibly fulfilling career—maybe the best ever. And yet, he remained concerned that there would be a hole in his soul—and there is. There is for every one of us who tries to find fulfillment in something other than the God of the Bible.

3) What ultimately brings you joy? Is there anything that makes you so happy or fulfilled that you feel like you'll never be sad again?

Answers might vary, but really press in on the fact that all things that we expect to bring joy but aren't God will ultimately fail. Money will be spent, time will be lost, fame will sour, and relationships will disappoint, but the triune God of the Bible is the only one who cannot change and will never leave us.

Main takeaway

A lot of things in this world bring us joy, but nothing can ultimately make us joyful or fulfill us other than God. Because we're made in His image, we're meant to find our full and final satisfaction in Him!

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

God has saved us from our guilt and sin, and He's done so much more. He's given us Himself, our heart's deepest desire, so that—just like the eunuch—we can approach even the difficult seasons of life with joy.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, thank You for saving us. Help us to always keep Your work on our behalf at the front of our minds and bring us to deep and meaningful joy in You. Draw near to us, and draw us near to You. Amen

Supporting Resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) What activity brings you the most joy?
- 2) Would you say that meeting with the Lord in His word and in prayer brings you joy?
- 3) What are some practical ways you could try to find your joy in the Lord more than other things?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) Was there a time you were able to find joy in Christ while you were suffering?
- 2) Would you use the word "joy" to describe your relationship with the Lord? Why or why not?
- 3) Can you think of the time during your life in which you experienced deep joy in Christ?