

Power Hour Lesson Summary for August 13, 2017

"Called to Break Down Barriers"

Lesson Text: Acts 8:26-39

Background Scripture: Acts 8

Devotional Reading: Romans 10:9-15

Acts 8:26-39 (NIV)

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **27** So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."**

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" **35** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. **36** As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39** 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.

TODAY'S LESSON AIMS

- **Learning Fact:** To identify the cultural differences that separated Philip and the Ethiopian.
- **Biblical Principle:** To know that it was God's will that Jesus came to save the world, and that we need to be ready and willing to share Him with people of all backgrounds.
- **Daily Application:** To think of ways we can explain Jesus to people of other cultures.

INTRODUCTION

Crossing Cultures

Approximately 8,500 Sudanese live in Omaha. Most have immigrated since 1995 because of warfare in their nation. The number of Somalis who live in Minneapolis is estimated to exceed 60,000. Louisville has about 80,000 immigrant refugees from Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, and Somalia.

Your nearest city likely has its own population of new immigrants whose culture is very different from the traditions of that city. How do we effectively understand and communicate with people having languages and customs different from our own? Our lesson today reveals how Philip reached across cultural lines for Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 32

Place: between Jerusalem and Gaza

Acts 8 records two episodes in which Philip, a Jewish Christian from Jerusalem, was pressed to cross cultural lines. First, he found himself in Samaria after persecution broke out in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1b, 4-8). The Samaritans of a certain city had for years been under the sway of a sorcerer named Simon (8:9-11). This was a people invested in the occult—surely not how Philip was accustomed to living! But despite crossing two cultural lines, Philip preached boldly, and many Samaritans came to faith in Christ.

Dealing with those cultural distinctives was a stretch for Philip, but at least he did not have to deal with barriers such as language difference or economic status. Yet the second episode challenged Philip to cross even more cultural lines. As we consider his success in this, we take care to remember that he is “Philip the evangelist” of Acts 21:8, not the apostle Philip of Mark 3:18; etc.

What Do You Think?

- What new challenge would cause you to step away from a successful ministry?
- Which of the ways the man is described would be the most helpful to know if you were to share the gospel with him today? Why?

POINTS TO PONDER

1. We should take advantage of every opportunity to share the gospel with those around us!
2. When God speaks and directs us, we need to obey! We don't always need to know how God is planning to use us, and we will only find out if we follow His leading.

CONCLUSION

Philip was prepared for this encounter because he knew not just the book of Isaiah, but the gospel as well. The exposition of Scripture is a powerful way to present the gospel to those who seek truth. We can fumble our own divine appointments if we cannot answer basic questions. A Christian should love the Bible not just for the marvelous encouragement it is personally, but as the true sword of the Spirit to be used in fighting unbelief among those who need the gospel (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

There is no mention in the text of Philip's being a trained rabbi or scribe; he probably was quite ordinary, not unlike Peter and John (Acts 4:13). Lacking a formal theological education is no excuse for us today! Having been chosen as one "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3) implies Philip's love for Scripture, since it is the ultimate source of wisdom (Psalm 119:105; etc.).

God used Philip's self-preparedness to good effect. That preparedness was likely the reason the Lord selected him for the divine appointment with a foreigner in the first place. And it took place on Philip's home turf! Opportunities to cross cultural lines with the gospel are all around.

PRAYER

- Heavenly Father, give us divine appointments to share Jesus. May You use our preparation to say the right things at the right time in the right way. We pray for this in Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

- People of all cultures need Jesus.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

- Next week's lesson is on how the Apostle Paul was "**Called to Preach**" the gospel. Prepare by reading Acts 9 and thinking about how God was able to use this man who had once persecuted Christ-followers.