

Philip Teaches the Man from Ethiopia

Scripture Reference: [Acts 8:4-5, 26-40](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Teachers, preachers, elders, and other Christians can help us understand the bible.



Background
Study



Story
Introduction



Telling
the Story



Review
Questions



Songs



Learning
Activities



Other Online
Resources

Story Overview:

An angel of God told Philip to go to a certain desert road that led to Gaza. Philip followed the angel's instructions found a very important man riding in a chariot. This man was from the country of Ethiopia and he was a chief official of the Queen. He was reading from an Old Testament scroll but was not able to understand it. Philip got into the chariot with the man and began explaining what it meant and all about

Jesus. When the chariot passed some water, the official asked Philip to baptize him (and he did!)

Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

Philip was a respected and faithful man who was one of [the seven deacons](#) first appointed in a congregation of Christians. The church first began in Jerusalem among the Jews but, following the [Stoning of Stephen](#), a great persecution rose up against the Christians and they left Jerusalem in large numbers. Christians, like Philip, began teaching people about Jesus wherever they went. This meant the good news of Jesus Christ spread out from Jerusalem to a wider and wider circle of people. Philip's first stop was Samaria where he taught many, including [Simon the Sorcerer](#).

Ethiopia probably refers to ancient Nubia which is present day southern Egypt and northern Sudan. "Candace" was a title used for the leading woman of the country so the Ethiopian Eunuch would have had a very important and trusted position as "an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Queen. Men placed in charge of the living quarters, the harem in particular, were sometimes made eunuchs (castrated) but the term "eunuch" could also be used in a more general way for an official or officer. Having access to the Queen's treasury lends me to think this was literal for this man.

Special Note to Teachers: More than one teacher has been flustered when a child asks the completely natural question, "What is a [eunuch](#)?" For younger children I have just answered that a eunuch was a special servant to the queen and was not allowed to have girlfriends, wives or children. For the older child I have just said that a eunuch is a man who has had an operation that makes him unable to father children. If an older child was being genuinely curious (and not asking to seek attention) I would consider telling him or her that castration involves removing the testicles. But, in that case, I would mention it to the parents after class so they can follow up at home if needed. We want to encourage children to ask questions about God's Word so never make a child feel it is not acceptable to ask. Be a teacher that

children can trust to give straight answers.

The Ethiopian was probably a proselyte (a Gentile who has converted to Judaism) but would not have been allowed full privileges at the temple because he was a eunuch ([Deuteronomy 23:1](#)). It is interesting that he chose to read from Isaiah. As a eunuch he must have been drawn to Isaiah's writing because Isaiah talks about God's acceptance of those, including eunuchs, who worship him ([Isaiah 56:3-5](#)).

The Ethiopian was on his way home from Jerusalem. His chosen reading to pass the hours away was from the prophet Isaiah and he must have wondered about the lamb Isaiah was referring to. When Philip ran up beside the chariot the eunuch was reading [Isaiah 53:7-8](#) and he was confused by what he was reading.

Philip went on to explain the good news of Jesus Christ. His words aren't recorded but he probably connected the sacrifice of lambs at the temple with the final and perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Priests had to sacrifice many lambs year after year but the sacrifice of Jesus was once and for all. His sacrifice was for the sins of everyone on the earth. See [Hebrews 9:24-28](#).

Part of the good news that Philip shared must have included the parallel between Christ's death, burial and resurrection and the death, burial and resurrection experienced in Christian baptism because the Ethiopian requested immediate baptism. See [Romans 6:3-10](#).




As soon as they came up out of the water the Spirit took Philip away until Philip "finds himself" in the town of Azotus. He continues preaching in the area and finally settles in the town of Caesarea (88.5 kilometres/55 miles north-west of Jerusalem).

We next read about Philip 20 years later when Paul stops in Caesarea on his way to Jerusalem ([Acts 21:8-9](#)). He is then referred to as "Philip the Evangelist" who had "four unmarried daughters who prophesied."

Understanding the Bible:

Children can relate to the man from Ethiopia because they often hear preaching or read Scripture that they do not understand. Just as the Spirit sent Philip to help the Ethiopian understand God provides a family of faith to surround children and help them learn what they need for a growing and maturing faith. Think of the people in

your congregation who provide this for children. This can be elders, preachers, teachers and other Christians. The children might also have other people like relatives who help them understand what the Scripture says. And you are that person to the children in your class.

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Before class use a sheet of paper to write the words from Isaiah that the Eunuch was reading: “He was led 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 the earth.” ([Acts 8:32b-33](#)) Roll the paper up to form a scroll. When the children arrive open the scroll and have one of the children read it. Ask them what this verse means and then discuss the fact that sometimes the word of God can be difficult to understand. Elders, preachers, bible class teachers, and others who study their bibles can often help us to understand what we read. In today’s story we are going to read about a man who read the very same verses that we just read. Someone helped him to understand.

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The Story:

To persecute someone is to cause harm to them on purpose so that they suffer. A man named Saul was one of the Jewish leaders who persecuted Christians. He even went from house to house and dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Soon many Christians began to leave Jerusalem and move to other places.

It was sad that they had to leave Jerusalem but the good thing was that wherever the Christians went they preached about Jesus. Because of that many more people heard the good news. One of the Christians preaching about Jesus was named Philip. He was a man who was wise and lived according to the Holy Spirit. Philip travelled to Samaria and told the people there about Jesus.

After this an angel of God came to Philip and gave him special instructions to go to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip knew that angels were servants of God that sometimes delivered messages from him. So he did just as the angel directed. When he arrived at the road Philip looked up and saw an important looking man in a chariot.

The man was from the Ethiopia. At that time this country was very rich and powerful. The man was an important official in charge of all of the Queen's treasures. He was on his way back home after going to Jerusalem to worship. The man was reading from a scroll that contained the writings of the prophet Isaiah. He was reading about a lamb that was sacrificed but he did not know what that meant.

The Holy Spirit of God told Philip to go up to the chariot so Philip ran up to it. Philip asked the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Sometimes it is difficult to understand what we are reading in the word of God. Sometimes we need help from people who understand the Bible better than we do. The man had many questions and asked Philip to help him understand.

The Ethiopian showed Philip the Scripture he was reading and Philip began to explain it to him.

Then Philip went on to tell him more and more about Jesus Christ so that the man could understand that Jesus was the Lamb of God. The man must have thought, "Oh, I see, now I understand what Isaiah was talking about." The Ethiopian was so happy to hear the Good News of Jesus.

The Ethiopian was so excited. He wanted to have his sins forgiven so that he could be a follower of Jesus. When the chariot passed near some water the Ethiopian said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?"

The Ethiopian ordered the chariot to stop and both he and Philip went down into to the water so Philip could baptise him.

As soon as they came up out of the water the Holy Spirit took Philip away. He later appeared in another town and went on teaching many other people about Jesus.

Even though the Ethiopian man never saw Philip again the bible says that he “went on his way rejoicing.” He was now a Christian and his life would never be the same.

Philip helped this man understand the Scriptures. When you have questions about what you are reading in the Bible who can help you understand?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print](#). Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. Who told Philip to go to the desert road to Gaza? An angel of the Lord
2. What was the Ethiopian Official riding in? A chariot
3. What was the Ethiopian Official doing when Philip first saw him? Reading a scroll of the book of Isaiah
4. What did the Ethiopian Official want to do after Philip taught him about Jesus? He wanted to be baptised

Song Suggestions:

- [Roll Roll Chariot Roll Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Have one of the elders or preachers visit class today to tell the children what they do to help explain God's word to people like Philip did. They may explain their education and experience. Ask them to show the class some sermon outlines or bible study courses.
- Sing: [Roll, Roll, Chariot Roll](#) or [We Will Roll the Gospel Chariot Along](#) or "Love is Something if You Give it Away" [lyrics here](#)
- Direct the children to mime the story today as a review

Crafts:

- [Make a scroll. Click here for instructions.](#) Write "Share God's Word" on the scroll.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Philip Teaches the Man from Ethiopia" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "Philip Teaches the Man from Ethiopia" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page \(baptism\) from http://www.calvarywilliamsport.com/5b.htm](http://www.calvarywilliamsport.com/5b.htm)
- [Visual Aid: Colour pictures that cover both Philip and the Ethiopian and the story of Saul's conversion \(Acts 9\) It is in pdf. and can be viewed on screen. However, I found it easier to save it to my computer and then view it. From <http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/From%20Persecutor%20to%20Preacher%20English.pdf>](#)
- [Craft: 3D picture with free template at http://www.jesus-without-language.net/philip-ethiopian-acts-8-make-2/](http://www.jesus-without-language.net/philip-ethiopian-acts-8-make-2/)
- [Craft: "Baptism in a bottle" from http://docthelmaskitchen.blogspot.com/2008/04/sunday-school-baptism-craft.html](http://docthelmaskitchen.blogspot.com/2008/04/sunday-school-baptism-craft.html)
- [Craft: Milk carton chariot from http://www.mssscrafts.com/crafts/chariot/index.htm](http://www.mssscrafts.com/crafts/chariot/index.htm)
- [Craft: Written instructions for a paper chariot from http://www.ehow.com/how_5709407_make-kids_craft-paper-chariot.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5709407_make-kids_craft-paper-chariot.html)
- [Craft: Pop-up book about salvation at http://biblesongsandmore.wordpress.com/activities/popup/salvation/#comment-147](http://biblesongsandmore.wordpress.com/activities/popup/salvation/#comment-147)
- [Printable Bookmarks. Enter your own personal text and then print them. http://activitiesforkids.com/bookmarks-for-kids/](http://activitiesforkids.com/bookmarks-for-kids/)
- [Game: Pass It On game with ping-pong balls from http://christiancrafters.com/game_passiton.html](http://christiancrafters.com/game_passiton.html)
- [Online quiz: How well have you studied for this lesson? I challenge you to try this yourself! From http://www.funtrivia.com/newflash/trivia.cfm?qid=330411](http://www.funtrivia.com/newflash/trivia.cfm?qid=330411)
- [How to make a chariot out of a cardboard box. You'll have to scroll down to the bottom as there are lots of items on a list. From http://www.dltk-bible.com/sunday_school_time_fillers.htm](http://www.dltk-bible.com/sunday_school_time_fillers.htm)
- [A good selection of puzzles and games to print](#)

at <http://www.gardenofpraise.com/bibl56s.htm>

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