

tracks? (e) Why do you think Saul had to ask who was speaking to him [when he asked, "Who are you, Lord?"] (f) Describe what you think you would have thought and felt if you had been one of those who accompanied Saul when all this happened? (g) Why do you think the Lord caused Saul to be blinded by his confrontation with Jesus? (h) Have you, or someone you know, ever been suddenly turned in a completely new spiritual direction? If so, tell about it.

An Interactive Life Application Bible Study of the Acts of the Apostles for Small Groups

Key: *Blue = New Testament* *Red = Words of Jesus*
Green = Old Testament Quotes

Lesson 12

1. Introduction: According to John 1:38-45, Philip was the third disciple Jesus called to follow him. Philip became one of the 12 who followed Jesus closely until his resurrection and ascension.

2. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-33 As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

³⁰ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³² The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth." [Isaiah 53:7-8]
(Greek Version)

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3. Background Information: A *eunuch* was a sexually impotent man, due to birth defects or surgery. At that time treasurers were often castrated. They would then be less likely to be tempted by women to cheat. Philip met a eunuch who was reading what Isaiah had written about 700 years before Jesus was born. They traveled along a road leading west from Jerusalem, then south along the sea.

4. Discussion: (a) How and why was Philip led to meet the Ethiopian eunuch? (b) How important is it to God for everyone to hear the Good News about Jesus? (c) Do people today still need help to be able to understand Scripture? How can we help people find answers to their questions about the Bible? (d) Explain how Jesus fulfilled each part of Isaiah's prophecy (Acts 8:32-33 [Is. 53:7-8]).

5. The Conversation between Philip and the Eunuch.

Acts 8:34-40 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" ³⁵ So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶ As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" ³⁸ He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea [on the N. W. Mediterranean coast].

6. Background: Jesus commanded his followers: "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. *Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved.*" (Mark 16:15-16) Baptism is a witness that sins are forgiven and cleansed.

7. Discussion: (a) Why do you think the Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized? (b) When the Scripture says that the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, what do you think that means? Did a miracle occur? (c) Where did Philip and the eunuch most likely spread the Good News? [Note: Azotus was on the southern coast directly west of Jerusalem. Caesarea was on the northern coast of Judea.]

8. Saul's Conversion.

Acts 9:1-9 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. ² He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

³ As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

⁵ "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! ⁸ Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. ⁹ He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink. [Note: Damascus is in southwestern Syria]

9. Discussion: (a) What intentions did Saul have toward the followers of Jesus? (b) Why do you think Saul was so zealous in his persecution against the followers of Jesus? (c) What were the first Christians called? [See verse 2] (d) What did Saul see and hear when God stopped him in his