

**Message #20**  
**“FAITH THAT SAVES”**  
**Acts 8:26-40**



**Preamble.....**

This passage emphatically underscores the fact that the values of God are not the values of this world. Ethiopia (possibly not the geographic area known as Ethiopia today, but still a distant African country) was viewed as the extremity of the world by the Roman world. Not only is the Ethiopian a resident of an empire on the outskirts of civilization; he’s also identified as a eunuch (a man who has been castrated). Luke could have described this Ethiopian simply as a “court official” but he doesn’t. He gives us the Ethiopian’s title (court official) and a physical description (eunuch). Why would Luke choose to focus on this?

Jewish law did not permit this man, as a eunuch, to enter the Jerusalem Temple (Leviticus 21:18-21; Deuteronomy 23:1). He could watch and worship from a distance in the Court of the Gentiles, but he could not enter the Court of Israel. Even if he’d been a Jew, his status as a eunuch would still have disqualified him from coming into the assembly. He would have had to worship God from afar.

In short, as both a Gentile and a eunuch this man was a double outcast!...a religious outside, someone who could not be welcomed into God’s presence.

*Note: This man may have been a convert to Judaism because he has a copy of Isaiah and, later, Luke speaks of Cornelius as being the first Gentile convert (Acts 11:1).*

So...how is Philip going to treat this man?

This passage reveals the heart of God, not the rules and regulations of man and religion.

**The Passage....**

Acts 8:26 tells us that an angel of the Lord was used to instruct Philip to leave his very fruitful ministry in Samaria and to travel south to the “desert road” linking Jerusalem and Gaza.

The purpose of the trip is not given. Just the command. God says “Go!”. So Philip goes.

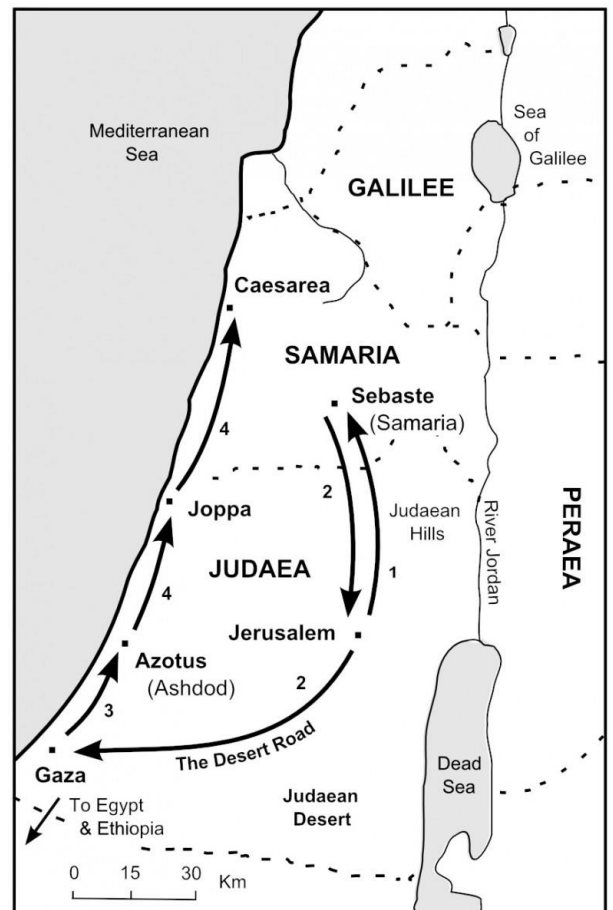
**What would it have been like for Philip to leave a place where so many exciting things were happening to go down a desert road?**

**What do you think this says about the heart of God? Do you think that humans view things the same way?**

The Spirit prompts Philip to go over to the Ethiopian, whereupon he discovers the man is reading from the prophet Isaiah (the part we know as Isaiah 53), though he does not understand what he is reading. He invites Philip to help him understand the passage.

This is the reason Philip was instructed to travel south...to leave the many to reach out to the “one”.

As followers of Jesus, we are all called to share our faith, to be witnesses of Jesus to the world.



This passage gives us some good advice for our own personal witnessing.

### 1. WITNESS AS OBEDIENCE

- It didn't seem to make sense to leave the fruitful public ministry to many to go for a personal ministry to one. But every heart is important to God...and to us. God's ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).
  - Philip was open (and obedient) to God's Spirit and available for whatever opportunities were given.
  - Are we only interested in God blessing our plans...or are we truly wanting to be a part of God's plans?  
**What opportunities has God given to you to share the gospel with others?**
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### 2. WITNESS ACROSS CULTURES

- Each one of us interacts with people from many cultures. How well do we understand these different backgrounds? How well do we understand our own culture? We must be able to present the gospel contextually in culturally appropriate ways.
  - We don't hear anything more about this Ethiopian, but it's a fair assumption that he became a faithful witness to the gospel in his own country and people.  
**Have you ever shared your faith with someone from another culture? What was it like for you?**
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### 3. HEARTS ARE PREPARED BY GOD

- Philip played an important part in this man becoming a follower of Christ...but the Holy Spirit had been preparing his heart and strategically arranging for this moment. It was no mere chance encounter.
  - Our sharing with others may only be a small part in the big picture...but it is an important part!  
**How can this knowledge encourage you in your own experiences of witnessing to others?**
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### 4. START WITH THE QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

- The Ethiopian had some serious questions and a desire to understand. Philip responded to his need.
  - We need to look for the "bridgeheads", the points at which we can respond to the needs of others.
  - Philip shows us that it is important to know and understand the Scriptures so we can respond.  
**What do you think is the difference between knowing about Jesus...and knowing Jesus?**
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### 5. A WITNESS BASED ON SCRIPTURE

- The Word of God is powerful. Read **Romans 1:16** and **2 Timothy 3:16,17**.
- Our sharing of the Gospel must always be based on, and consistent, with the Word of God.  
**DISCUSS: You cannot do the work of God without the word of God.**

### 6. JESUS IS THE THEME AND FOCUS

- No matter where Philip was, he couldn't stop talking about Jesus.
  - "We must offer them Christ!" (Wesley). Christianity IS Christ.  
**Do you think churches (and individuals) can have a focus that is not Jesus? Explain.**
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### 7. AIM AT A RESPONSE

- The Ethiopian was converted and baptised...and probably had a ripple effect of spiritual impact.
- The Gospel calls for a response. God's sovereignty in salvation does not negate man's responsibility.
- God rewards the seeking heart. (Jeremiah 29:13-14)

God never intended Israel to be an exclusive reservoir of divine blessing. He wanted His people to share the Good News. He calls us to have that same attitude...not a reservoir, but a conduit, of His blessings. Instead of being caught up in ritual, rut, routine – content with comfort and complacency – God calls us to be committed and submitted...not my will, Lord, but Yours, be done.

**"Good morning, God...I love You. What are You up to today? I want to be a part of it."**

(Norman Grubb)