

Small Groups Study Guide

Acts 8:26-39

November 19, 2023

1. Spend time discussing how everyone is doing.
2. Open with a short prayer or popcorn style (where everyone can pray a little bit)
3. Lesson
 - a. Go around the room and share:
 - i. Where were you baptized and if so when?
 - ii. What was it like?
 - iii. How old were you?
 - iv. What denomination (if any) were you baptized in?
 - v. What did your baptism mean to you then?
 - vi. What does your baptism mean to you now?
 - b. We'll read the story of one of the baptisms we have in scripture. Read scripture.

Acts 8:26-39

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south[a] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"[b] 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip[c] baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.

- c. Notes and questions

- i. We don't know where this happened. Philip had been in Samaria sharing the good news. Here he is again confronted with a foreigner who worked in the palace of a pagan queen. "In this vividly written piece Luke is not interested in specifics of geography. Rather, he wants to show how God directly led Philip to do something significant." (NIV Application Commentary)
 - ii. What would you have thought/done if you were in Philip's shoes in v. 26?
 - iii. V. 27 He is called a "eunuch" (eunochos); there is disagreement among scholars as to whether he was literally a eunuch, for this word was used also for trusted workers of a royal court. (The NIV Application Commentary) ... my advice is don't worry about it.
 - iv. Ethiopia (Cush in the Old Testament) corresponds to what is known as Nubia. It encompasses parts of what is now southern Egypt and northern Sudan. In ancient literature the Ethiopians were considered as living in the ends of the earth. In other words, with the gospel going to the Samaritans and then to the Ethiopian, it was going to the last two geographical spheres of the Great Commission as given in Acts 1:8 (NIV Application Commentary).
 - v. The chariot would have shown this eunuch had high standing in the queen's court and for Philip to approach it would have required a lot of faith and trust. Plus boldness.
 - vi. Most likely scholars think the passage the eunuch was reading (Isa. 53:7-8)
 - vii. "It is the Ethiopian who suggests baptism when they come to some water (v. 36). Philip may have discussed baptism with the Ethiopian, or he may have already known about it because it was the initiatory rite for Gentiles who converted to Judaism." NIV Application Commentary.
 - Why did or would you want to be baptized?
 - viii. The ending to the story: "Philip is then taken away suddenly by the Spirit of the Lord. But the newfound joy of the Ethiopian cannot be dampened by his disappearance (v. 39). We do not hear of him again in the Bible, though Irenaeus, writing in the second century, says that he became a missionary to the Ethiopians. Philip next appears in Azotus, some twenty miles north of Gaza, and continues traveling north, preaching incessantly until he reaches Caesarea (v. 40). It is there that we find him again about twenty years later, now the father of four unmarried prophetesses (21:8). Luke, who probably visited him on this occasion, describes him as "Philip the evangelist"—a most appropriate title for one who was so mightily used in evangelism." NIV Application Commentary.
- d. The Disciples and baptism:
- i. Transferring into our denomination
 - ii. How we typically baptize (immersion) but there are other circumstances
 - iii. There are many other theological consequences that go with what we believe about baptism.
- e. Pray