

Bible Stories for Adults

Philip

Acts 8

Opening

- Gathering: Why is it more difficult to reach out to people from a different culture?
- Today's Focus: Philip effectively witnessed to Samaritans and helped the church grow beyond Jerusalem and Judea.
- Key Verses: *When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12*
- The eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." ... Then Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36-38*

Opening Prayer

Lesson

The Church's Mission (Acts 1:8)

- What mission did Jesus give to His church before He ascended?
Matthew 28:19 = Go and make disciples of all nations
- How could this small group of only 120 accomplish such a huge task? = Spirit would empower
Acts 1:8 = Progress from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to ends of the earth

Location, Location, Location (Acts 5:16)

- Where did this group begin their ministry and why? = Spirit came there at Pentecost
Acts 1:4, 12; 2:1, 4 = Jerusalem, because Jesus told them to start there
- How effective were they in Jerusalem?
Acts 2:41, 46-47; 4:4, 16; 5:28; 6:7 = Grew rapidly and effectively In Jerusalem
- Did the Good News move out into Judea as Jesus had said?
Acts 5:12, 16 = Yes, but only by the Spirit bringing people, not by going forth

A Gentle Reminder (Acts 6)

- What problem provided a reminder that Christ came for everyone, not just those in Jerusalem?
Acts 6:1 = Hebrew Jews got preferential treatment over Greek Jews (still only Jews)
- How might the solution to this problem have been a gentle reminder to look outward?
Acts 6:3-5, 9 = Greek-named deacons, Stephen preached in Greek-speaking synagogues
- What did Stephen say that should have also reminded the Christians of moving past Jerusalem?
Acts 7:48-50 = God doesn't just live in the temple or Jerusalem, but in heaven and earth

A Not-So-Gentle Reaction (Acts 7)

- Of what did Stephen accuse the Jews that could warn a church focused only on its home town?
Acts 7:51 = Resisting the Holy Spirit, ignoring His guidance and calling to go out
- How did the Sanhedrin respond to this accusation? = Stephen became the first Christian martyr
Acts 7:57-58 = They rejected his message and stoned and killed him

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God Turns Evil to Good (Acts 8:1-5)

Did killing Stephen satisfy the Jews who were trying to protect their faith?

Acts 8:1, 3 = Saul, an over-zealous Pharisee persecuted Christians thru Judea and Samaria

Usually only men were held in jail before a trial. Why did Saul even put women in jail?

Galatians 1:13-14 = He was trying to destroy the church

How did God use this evil act to help His need for the church to move beyond Jerusalem?

Acts 8:4 = *Those who had been scattered preached the Word wherever they went*

How did the church stay together if they all ran from the dangers in Jerusalem?

Acts 8:1b-2 = The apostles and godly men stayed to keep the church together

Dying unburied was a great dishonor. It was illegal to publicly mourn for a criminal.

How did the central church in Jerusalem stay in touch with the scattered Christians?

Acts 8:5 = They traveled. Philip, one of the 7 deacons went and preached in Samaria

Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria (Acts 8:6)

Did Philip go to preach to the scattered Christians or to witness to Samaritans?

Acts 8:6 = He brought the Good News to the Samaritans, Did miracles like Stephen

Why was this a significant step for the early Christians?

John 4:9 = They were Jews and had been raised despising Samaritans

How would Samaritans feel about rumors that Christians spoke against venerating the temple?

John 4:19-20 = They'd like it; Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim

What would Jesus have thought about this teaching that God isn't only in the temple?

John 4:21-24 = It is exactly what He preached and clearly explained to the Samaritan woman

With the Pentateuch as their Scriptures, would the Samaritans accept a Messiah from the Jews?

Deuteronomy 18:17-19 = God had promised a great prophet from their brothers

How likely is it that Philip would have reminded the Samaritans of this?

Acts 3:22-23; 7:37 = Peter and Stephen had already used these words with the Jews

The Great Power (Acts 8:7-13)

How effective was Philip, a Greek-speaking Jew, in Samaria?

Acts 8:7-8 = The Spirit gave him great powers, many healed, great joy in the city

Had these Samaritans seen great powers before? = Mentioned by non-Biblical writers

Acts 8:9 = Yes, a man in the city named Simon was a terrific magician

Was Simon ignored because of his great ego?

Acts 8:10-11 = No, they assumed his great powers were from God or he was a god

Did the Samaritans view Philip as another great magician like Simon?

Acts 8:12 = No, they listened to what he said about Jesus (v6) and became Christians

Did Simon get mad about this new competition and try to discredit Philip?

Acts 8:13 = No, he was impressed by Philip's Greater Powers and followed him

Let's Check This Out (Acts 8:14-17)

What did the church in Jerusalem think when they heard about Philip's activities in Samaria?

Acts 8:14 = They sent the head cheeses, Peter and John, to check it out

What did Peter and John find?

Acts 8:15-17 = They found Christians who needed the Spirit, they prayed it on them

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God's Purpose for the Visit (Acts 11:18)

Why would God have withheld the Spirit from the Samaritans until Peter and John arrived?
Acts 11:1-3, 15-18 = So the church would understand that God was moving them outward
Couldn't they have learned from the evening news? Why did Peter need to bring the Spirit?
Matthew 16:17-19 = As leader, Peter represented the church bringing the keys to heaven
Peter opened doors at Pentecost, now for Samaritans, later for Gentiles (Cornelius)
Brought acceptance by and incorporation into the one Christian church

Anything for a Buck (Acts 8:18-23)

What did Simon the magician think when he saw the Spirit being given to the new Christians?
Acts 8:18-19 = He thought it was a great trick and offered to pay them to teach it to him
What did Peter think of this opportunity to fund some great new church programs?
Acts 8:20-23 = He condemned Simon for his evil motives and lack of faith
But verse 13 says Simon believed and was baptized. How could Peter accuse him of scheming?
Matthew 7:15-20 = Jesus had warned Peter and the others about false prophets

Faith (Acts 8:24)

But Simon knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Doesn't that mean that he was a Christian?
Matthew 7:21-23 = No, just knowing that Jesus is Lord doesn't save
What else is needed beyond knowing Jesus? Believing that what we know is true?
James 2:19 = Even Satan and his demons believe
So what was Simon missing?
Romans 10:9-13 = Must *call on Him* - confess and trust and you will be saved
What are the three elements of an adult faith? = Bethel New Testament Picture 12
Notitia = Knowledge - Must know something before you can have faith
Assensus = Assent (believe) - Must accept that knowledge as truth
Fiducia = Trust - Faith involves putting trust into that which is accepted as truth
Was Simon rebuked for not developing his faith beyond mere assent? = We don't develop, we accept
Ephesians 2:8-9 = No, but for not accepting the faith that only comes as a free gift
Did Simon see the error of his ways, repent of his sin and ask for this saving faith?
Acts 8:24 = No, he asked for pardon and forgiveness without repenting

Outward Bound (Acts 8:25-29)

Did this experience in Samaria effectively open the church to inclusion of these half-brothers?
Acts 8:25 = Yes, Peter and John purposely witnessed through Samaria on way home
Did Philip focus his ministry on witnessing to the Samaritans? = Why go to desert to witness?
Acts 8:26 = No, he followed the Spirit's lead and direction, even to the empty desert
Why would the Spirit send a great evangelist like Philip out into the desert?
Acts 8:27-29 = He sent him to a specific individual - a non-Jew Ethiopian God-fearer

Ethiopia - South of Egypt, north of current Ethiopia between Aswan and Khartoum
Ruled by the queen mother (title of *Candace*)
The king was the child of the sun and was too holy for government
The eunuch was a very important official - "Secretary of the Treasury"
Only important and rich people could get a copy of a book of Scripture = hand copied

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The God-Fearer

Proselyte - A Gentile who believed in God, was baptized and circumcised

God-fearer - A Gentile who believed in God and was baptized, but not circumcised

Why would this man likely be a God-fearer and not a full proselyte?

Deuteronomy 23:1 = A eunuch (castrated man) was too mutilated to enter Judaism

Why might he be so interested in the book of Isaiah to have a copy?

Isaiah 56:3-5 = He was included into God's family despite being a foreigner and eunuch

An Opportunity to Witness (Acts 8:30-35)

What did Philip do with this opportunity to witness to this Ethiopian? = People read aloud then

Acts 8:30-31 = He casually offered and was invited to explain a prophesy from Scripture

What section had the Ethiopian so confused and why? = Jews thought it meant the Israel nation

Acts 8:32-34 = Isaiah 53 on the Suffering Servant (describes Jesus' passion)

How did Philip respond to this great lead-in?

Acts 8:35 = He *began with that very passage ... and told him the Good News*

A Response of Faith (Acts 8:36-38)

How effective was Philip's witness? = Philip likely was gun-shy because of Simon (v37)

Acts 8:36-38 = The Ethiopian became a true believer and was baptized

Was it difficult for Philip to provide this witness to the Ethiopian?

1 Peter 3:15 = No, he was prepared to give an answer to the reason for his hope

Was Philip able to respond so well because he had a carefully prepared witness speech?

Luke 21:15 = No, the Spirit gave him the words, just as He will give us the words

The Spirit's Direction (Acts 8:39-40)

How else do we see the Spirit's hand besides the desert meeting and the Scripture selection?

Acts 8:39 = The Spirit suddenly took Philip away (disappeared in open desert)

Note: Simon would have loved this one!

How did Philip react to this strange and amazing experience?

Acts 8:40 = He saw God's hands and continued to preach everywhere he went

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When has God taken a bad experience in my life and turned it for His good?
(Acts 7:57-8:4; Genesis 50:20; Isaiah 38:17; Jer 29:11; Romans 8:28; Eph 6:19-20; Phil 1:12-14)
2. How often do I share my faith with others wherever I go?
(Acts 8:4-5, 25, 40; Isaiah 6:8; Mark 16:20; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 John 1:1-3)
3. When have I recognized the presence of the Holy Spirit in others?
(Acts 8:14-23; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; 1 Samuel 10:9-11; 19:19-21; Luke 1:41-45; John 3:1-2)
4. When have I recognized the presence of the Holy Spirit in me?
(Acts 8:14-17; 36-38; Mark 6:7-13; John 20:21-22; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:5; Galatians 5:16-25)
5. Do I recognize the Spirit's guidance in my life?
(Acts 8:26-30; 9:10-17; 16:6-10; 1 Sam 11:1-8; Luke 1:26-38; 4:1; 11:9-13; Romans 8:1-17, 26-27)