

## **Breaking Down Barriers and Stepping out in Faith- Part 1**



**Bible Story: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch- Gospel to the Gentiles**

**Scripture: Acts 10-11**

**Video: <https://youtu.be/DqKIOsCOeJY>**

When it comes to evangelism it is far better to build bridges than erect barriers. God called his church in the book of Acts to intentionally break down barriers. God's ultimate plan is to unite all things (people especially) under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9, 10).

Some people are geographically close to us but miles away when it comes to faith (like the Samaritans in Acts 8:4-25). Others are geographically far from us but religiously close (like the eunuch in our text today). There were several barriers that could have hindered Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8) from evangelizing this man from Africa: nationality (he was Ethiopian), occupation (he was a eunuch), position (he was a powerful official), wealth (he was secretary of finance), and possibly ethnicity (was he a Jew who lived in Africa or a proselyte to Judaism?). No matter, if we, like Philip, are to break down barriers we must do two things:

**Go Where They Are**

***Read: Acts 8:26-29***

God called Philip from a successful revival in Samaria (Acts 8:4-13) to a desert road with one inquisitive government official. An *angel of the Lord* and the *Holy Spirit* cooperated to create a divine appointment. South of Samaria and southwest of Jerusalem was a desert road that went *to Gaza* (an ancient Philistine city). Here Philip would encounter a man from

Ethiopia. Luke gave us his biographical sketch. Most intriguing is that he had been *to Jerusalem to worship*. Could this imply that he really was a Jew? Luke would reserve the big ethnic leap of the gospel for Cornelius and his household (Acts 10).

As part of his worship in Jerusalem, the eunuch purchased a scroll (no small purchase). He was reading Isaiah. The Holy Spirit told Philip, *Go to that chariot and stay near it*, which means “be joined to it” or “be glued to it.” But twice in this paragraph we see the word *go*. To break down barriers, we must go where the people are.

## Scratch Where They Itch

### *Read: Acts 8:30-39*

Perhaps to break down barriers we do not have to unload the whole gospel truck. Maybe we just have to know what questions the people have. When Philip got close enough to the eunuch’s chariot, he *heard the man reading Isaiah*. This was not unusual because reading in the ancient world was mostly done out loud. Philip engaged the man with a fantastic question, *Do you understand what you are reading?* The eunuch had a cognitive problem with who the *sheep/lamb* was in the text. He desired some help, so he invited Philip into the chariot for a hermeneutics lesson.

The text was Isaiah 53:7, 8. Some servant or victim was being discussed, but the eunuch was confused about his identity. And it seems that this servant or victim ended up in a kangaroo court (can you say, Sanhedrin?) where justice was the last thing on the minds of the jurors. Of course the text is messianic. Jesus’ life was taken up from the earth. In light of verse 36, one also wonders what was going through the mind of the eunuch when he read, *Who can speak of his descendants?* Could he, as an Ethiopian eunuch, qualify as the lamb’s descendant?

Philip did what any good evangelist should do. He answered directly the question being asked. He began where the eunuch itched and scratched there. Philip started with Isaiah 53:7, 8 and began to unfold (evangelize) the gospel story. Would it not have been good to hear that exposition?

If the text is true, if Jesus is real, and if the cross and empty tomb lead to salvation, then the eunuch must respond to the sheep in the text. Philip did not manipulate the eunuch, but he explained Scripture clearly and created an atmosphere where the eunuch felt comfortable asking, *What can stand in the way of my being baptized?* (*Stand in the way* translates from one word that is a key term in Acts. It is the term usually translated “hinder.”) The answer to the eunuch’s question is, “Nothing.”

A beautiful description of an immersion is described—perhaps following a confession. (The confession in v. 37 is not found in the best manuscripts and was likely added later.) In an act similar to what happened to Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), the Spirit whisked Philip away, the

eunuch went home rejoicing, and the church began to grow in Ethiopia. Barriers to the gospel were falling.



### Reflection Time:

1. What do we learn about the Ethiopian official?
2. What cultural barriers likely separated the Ethiopian and Philip? What common ground did they share?
3. Why did the Ethiopian invite Philip to join him in his chariot?
4. How did these verses from Isaiah 53 provide a great starting point for Philip to share “the good news about Jesus” (vs. 35)?
5. How do you feel about the eunuch’s immediate baptism? How does this fit with your church’s view and practice of baptism?
6. How did the story end for Philip? How did it end for the Ethiopian?
7. How do you see God taking initiative in the story? How do you see Philip taking initiative? What is the relationship between the two?
8. What lessons can we learn from this story?

# Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch

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 Y I V E G N P R E A C H I N G B D B X G Y C I R  
 Q C Z Z P S W W S T S D S J G P K R R I I G P N  
 N X A B O S F J Y J P E N S F K O H L W V P O C  
 Z A Y X B F C O M X T Z Q D Z Z J I O M P W I W  
 S F E L R J D L Z O R I A P P R Y O X E W G H I  
 V Z G O A I V T L K C T T Q S T G R W V I X T C  
 G Q J O U H M C Q N R P I Z P C V N M Z V D E S  
 V C M I N F V B E C W A I Y U Y O D I J L N Z H  
 C R C J D N R N M A L B S T Y E B X U G O P F G  
 K Z K H E M H N R T T D A L V Z Q G J P R Y D E  
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 G K Z J S K B O F Z E B A M F N N O R H S Z Y L  
 I N A U T Z I E E E M D H F L A K D U I S D I F  
 X V K I A V Z S U S E J L N L K K N S L P R T H  
 T H Y M N Y C P F C S W F G L Q E E A I I Q D O  
 H R O G D M Z W A T E R L W S M P W L P R W H X  
 P A X T Z Z X Y T P E T E W L Z G S E O I E H X  
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good  
news

preaching

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Lord's  
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water

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jesus

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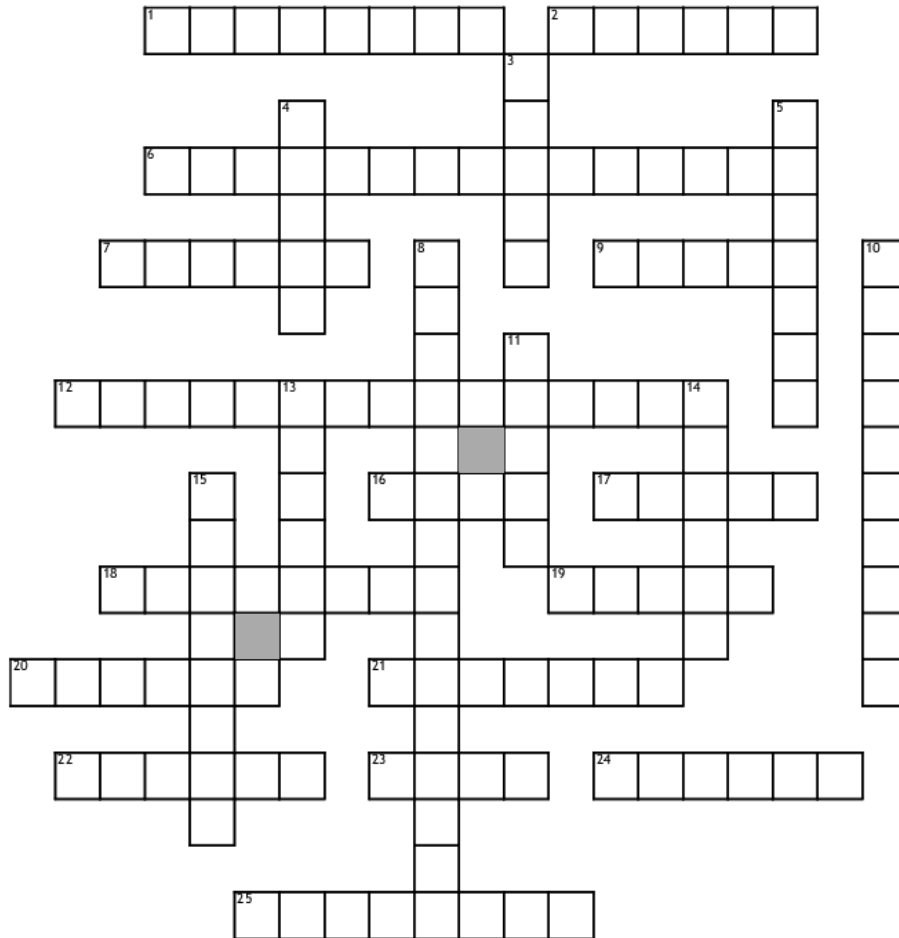
isaiah

jerusalem

Ethiopian

Philip

# Acts Chapter 8



## Across

1. The Ethiopian eunuch was in charge of what?
2. After baptizing the eunuch, Philip suddenly went away and appeared here.
6. On Philip's way down the road in chapter 8, he met whom?
7. Saul put both men and women of the church here.
9. The eunuch said, "Look, here is \_\_\_\_\_."
12. People of Samaria called Simon this.
16. He began to destroy the church.
17. Philip told the eunuch the good news about \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The eunuch wanted to stop by the water so he could be \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Peter told Simon his \_\_\_\_\_ was not right with God.
20. He went to Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.
21. This word means queen of the Ethiopians
22. Peter told Simon to \_\_\_\_\_ of his wickedness.
23. The road that the angel told Philip to take led from Jerusalem to here.
24. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading the Book of \_\_\_\_\_.
25. Philip preached the gospel in all the towns until he reached this place.

## Down

3. Simon offered the apostles \_\_\_\_\_ for the ability to lay hands on and give the Holy Spirit to others.
4. He practiced sorcery.
5. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch sat together here.
8. Because of persecution, those in the church were scattered through these places.
10. Peter and John placed their hands on the baptized of Samaria and they received this.
11. These type of men deeply mourned for Stephen.
13. He baptized the eunuch.
14. The angel of the Lord told Philip to go down what kind of road?
15. When people of Samaria believed Philip, they were \_\_\_\_\_.