

*What are some of the reasons for rejoicing when we first believe?
Let's not forget that they should still be a source of joy for us today.*

The other thing that happened was that Philip was “snatched away”. God may have miraculously moved Philip and the message of Jesus on to his next assignment. But even if Philip was simply redirected to move on, the Holy Spirit was moving his message forward through Philip.

Acts 8:40 NLT - 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.

Philip eventually resided Caesarea in for 25 years and had a family. But on his way there he preached the Good News of Jesus. Whether you are at your final destination or just on the way, you can be a witness to Jesus and a source of joy to those around you.

WRAP-UP

God prepared Philip to take His message out from Jerusalem and to the world. Using the persecution of the church through Saul, He led Philip to his assignments of Samaria, the Ethiopian and eventually Caesarea. Along the way Philip was faithful to share the Good News and leave a legacy of joy for those who believed on Jesus.

Memory Verse

But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. - Acts 8:4 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Tune in to God's voice this week and see if He has a divine appointment waiting for you.

“Moving the Message Forward”

Book of Acts – Week #10

INTRODUCTION

Our study in the book of Acts continues as the church is persecuted and the Good News is taken beyond Jerusalem. The followers of Jesus might have preferred to stay together right where they were, but God, through His Holy Spirit, was moving the message out to the world. In fact, in Acts 1:8 Jesus had stated this would happen – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” And Philip’s experience stands as an example of how God was doing just that.

Key Passage

ACTS 8:1-40

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. God Prepares His messengers and sets the stage

Acts 8:1, 4-5 NLT - 1 Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. ... 4 But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. 5 Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah.

Philip was one of the seven who were assigned to feed the widows along with Stephen in the previous chapter. He received that assignment because he was respected, Spirit-filled and wise; a man of good character. But persecution had forced him to leave Jerusalem and go to Samaria.

John 4:39 NLT - 39 Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!"

Philip hadn't been trained to be an evangelist, he was on the run from persecution and went to a nearby town to escape. But God had prepared this place in advance. In John chapter 8 we see that many in Samaria already believed in Jesus as Messiah.

God changed Philip's plans and led him to Samaria. Has God ever changed your plans? When you consider where you live and where you work, what unique opportunities are there for you to be a light for God? How has God used the Covid crisis to create opportunities for you to share your faith?

2. God points the way and opens the door

Acts 8:26-28 NLT - 26 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.

The ministry of Philip in Samaria was blessed by God. But God had much more planned for Philip. In Acts 8:26 he received a very specific call directly from the Angel of the Lord. And even though he knew the "where", he didn't know the "who" or "why". His choice was to take his first step in faith, trusting God to reveal what's next.

Philip's obedience meant traveling about 100 miles, on foot. He didn't know why until he met the Ethiopian. Why do you think God would call him away from a town that was responding to the message of Jesus, to speak to one man? Have you ever found yourself going somewhere or approaching someone at God's prompting, without a plan, only to find it was a "divine appointment" set up by God? If so, what happened?

As Philip approached the Ethiopian, he heard him reading from Isaiah 53. This part of the Old Testament is widely considered to be prophetic about the Messiah. Sometimes we forget that all of scripture points us to Jesus. In fact, the early church only had the Old Testament to draw from as they spread their message. But the message of Jesus is clear from the beginning to the end of the Bible, and we should be familiar with all of scripture. After his resurrection, even Jesus showed that the writings of Moses and the prophets were referring to Him.

Luke 24:25-27 NLT - 25 Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. 26 Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" 27 Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Where do you go to gain insight into the scripture? Do you have a commentary, or a teacher you find particularly helpful? Have you included the Old Testament in your regular bible reading?

3. Transformation results

Acts 8:35-36, 38-39 NLT - 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.

Philip had been prepared, directed and given an open door to share the Good News. The Ethiopian's response was an enthusiastic desire to confirm his faith through baptism. Our decision to believe in Jesus and commit our lives to Him is an internal one, but baptism gives us a way to outwardly confirm that commitment. We typically think of Baptism as a celebration service at our church, but for this man, it was an immediate act of obedience.

What is your baptism story? If you have not been baptized but believe it is your time to do so, we will be holding a baptism on August 23rd after our 9am outdoor service. You can sign up at newlifepismo.com/baptism.

Following his baptism two things were recorded. The Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. This was not the first time Philip's ministry left a legacy of joy. Acts 8:8 tells us the same was true in Samaria.

Acts 8:8 NLT 8 So there was great joy in that city.