

Episode: Acts Series No. 4

Character: Philip of Caesarea

Primary Scriptures: Acts 8

Story Summary: Philip evangelizes in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

32 AD (?) Trail and death of Stephen. Christians begin to scatter.

33 AD (?) Philip

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 8:1, 5, 20-22, 30-31, 35, 37-38

Upon the death of Stephen, most of the believers in Jerusalem were scattered throughout Samaria and Judea, except the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem. Severe persecution was begun by the Jewish leaders. Further, the believers lost support from the Jewish social structure, so they needed to replicate many of its benefits and protections. They needed to do this while making disciples.

Philip was one of seven Greek men chosen by the Church to help meet the needs of widows and other needy Christians. After the death of Stephen, Philip went to Samaria to avoid further persecution from the Jewish leaders. He was so effective in Samaria that Peter and John were sent to see his results. While there, Peter and John imparted the Holy Spirit to the new believers.

The Holy Spirit led Philip south of Jerusalem, where he had the privilege to evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch, who was in charge of the treasury of Ethiopia. Since he was an important government official and would very likely be traveling with a big retinue. Try to imagine a string of chariots, with the eunuch reading the Bible in his chariot while his driver minds the horses. Then, a strange man comes running up. How would the soldiers react?

After baptizing the eunuch, the Holy Spirit took Philip to the coast where he evangelized further, until he ended in Caesarea, his new home. That detail gets bypassed by many, but is a key factor in the future of Christianity.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was losing the social structure of the Jews so impactful to the early Christians?
 2. Why did Philip go to the Samaritans? What is the difference between Samaritans and Gentiles?
 3. Name some religious reasons why being a eunuch was such a disadvantage.
 4. What do you think it means that Philip's daughters prophesied? Do you think that has any relevance to today about women's roles in churches?
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1. Family support, support for poor people, a place to worship, acceptance by local community, support for travelers. 2. Expressly commanded by Jesus to do so; Not much, but Samaritans had Jewish blood in their ancestry and also worshiped the same God as the Jews. 3. Could not worship with the assembly of Jews, always an outsider, could not be fully accepted as a Jewish proselyte.

Application Questions:

1. Philip always reacted with immediate obedience when the Spirit wanted him to do something. What would that trait look like in your life?
2. How do you think Philip prepared himself to become so useful in the cause of the Lord? [he had wisdom and was full of the Spirit, was trusted by his peers, knew the Bible]. How can you better prepare yourself?
3. Simon the Sorcerer was drawn to the power of the Holy Spirit because he thought it could benefit him personally. In what ways do you find yourself seeing Christianity through this lens? How can you alter your perspective in those times?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Early Jewish converts to Christianity experienced a high social cost for their decision, including alienation from their own families and communities. In what ways might you experience a social cost? How can you make up for what you lose?
2. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to do something, do you listen and obey?
3. How can you prepare yourself to be useful in the cause of the Lord to bring your peers to Christ and be a good Christian example to those around you?