

A WHOLE NEW TEAM

WEEK 11

AN
ATHLETE
STUDY

JUST ONE MORE

In WWII, a soldier named Desmond Doss became a medic (as portrayed in the film *Hacksaw Ridge*). Surprisingly, he was a conscientious objector—a pacifist. He never touched a firearm believing that his job was to save lives, not take them. Nobody wanted him in their unit and his fellow soldiers ridiculed, beat, and berated him to make him quit. He never did.

Long (and truly amazing) story short, in a fierce battle his company retreated. Doss stayed behind and rescued over 70 wounded men while under constant gunfire dragging them to safety. Over and over, after each successful rescue, he repeated to himself the phrase, “just one more.” This man nobody wanted in their unit ended up receiving the Medal of Honor for his heroism.

Last week we saw Philip and the others preaching to crowds—like the old Billy Graham Crusades where tons of people would show up. God loves saving multitudes. However, God’s interest is in individuals. Today, we’ll see Philip reach just one more, but one more should always be our focus as we live on mission.

ACTS 8:26–35

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

One main lesson we should all consider from a study of *Acts* should be our role in the ongoing legacy. God is continuing his kingdom story even now. One of the challenges to the early church was the misunderstandings surrounding the Gospel—misunderstandings that still persist in many ways. Scan the QR code to watch a 45-minute sermon on *Clarifying the Gospel*. Consider your faith. Test it. Share it!



DISCUSSION

In your opinion, what is the key to preparation, generally speaking?

1. Who spoke to Philip once he arrived? What direction did he receive? (29)

2. How did Philip respond? (30a & 35, also Study Notes)

3. What does the Ethiopian’s response tell you about his character and spiritual hunger? (31)

4. Think of that one person or group that you have been praying about through this playbook. How do you need to prepare yourself for the next evangelistic opportunity God opens to you?

5. What questions could you use to open a conversation about Jesus?

It’s often been said, “*You’re either a missionary or the mission field.*” Which are you? Either answer is OK! It just takes an honest evaluation. Talk to your coach for help!

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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STUDY NOTES REPRESENT

Stephen Curry is a beast! He's one of the best players in the NBA history. Yet, in Curry's own words, *"There's more to me than just this jersey I wear, and that's Christ living inside me."*

He exemplified the kind of missional mindset all believers should have when he said, *"I try and use every game as an opportunity to witness... When I step on the floor people should know who I represent."*

Would anyone in your life be surprised to find out you're a Christian? Does your life represent the One in whom you believe? The amazing part of studying Acts is that we're invited into the same mission we see Philip carrying out today!

GOD'S TEAM REACHES OUT

The angel told Philip, *"Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* Luke added for readers who may not know, *this is a desert place*. We might reasonably ask why he should leave all the newborn believers in Samaria and head to the desert. Answer: Because God said so. Without argument, Philip obediently *rose and went*.

Philip had a divine encounter with *an Ethiopian eunuch*. This man served as *a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians*. For background, men serving so close to the heads of power had the means, motives, and opportunities to overthrow the royal bloodline by force, treachery, or scandal. To minimize such threats, such men were often made eunuchs. After all, if a man is childless, he can't pass on the kingdom to any bloodline heirs. Castration expressed extreme loyalty to the royal family, whom he served at very high level.

Additionally, *"Candace"* isn't the Queen's name, but her official title, like "Pharaoh." That made Ethiopia a matriarchy with the Queen handling the daily charge of running the government.

He had come to Jerusalem to worship traveling from well south of Egypt. He could have been an Ethiopian Jew, or just interested in the God of the Jews. Regardless, as a worshiper from Ethiopia, he represented the next concentric circle of the ever-expanding gospel. The key here is to appreciate that this man was very religious toward Israel's God—but lacked a personal relationship with

1-on-1 Evangelism

Lessons learned from Philip's Model

Before:

- Be open to and led by the Holy Spirit (26)
- Be obedient & responsive (27)
- Be relationally committed (29)
- Be enthusiastic when doors open (30)

During:

- Create a thirst for truth (30-31)
- Begin where they are spiritually (32-34)
- Open the Word to share Christ (35)
- Bring them to an informed decision (36-37)
- Exhort new converts to publicly testify (38)

Israel's Savior, Jesus Christ.

While *returning*, he was *seated in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah*. Prompted by the *Spirit to go over, Philip ran to him and heard him reading and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"*

This encounter provides a great reminder that reading Scripture or an interest in the Bible isn't the same thing as saving faith. Salvation isn't found in reading the Bible, going to church, or even this study. It's only found in surrender to Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).

Philip asked a great question to start the conversation. He was immediately *invited to come up and sit with him*. While you may not see peers sitting down reading Scripture, there's a hundred ways to approach an intentional gospel conversation. In fact, we linked to a really great conversational approach to sharing the gospel all the way back in Week 3.

IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

You may have heard the age old quote that goes something like, *"I share the gospel every day, and when I have to, I use words."* We can talk all day about "living the Christian life" in order to cultivate people's interest and gain a hearing. Nobody disagrees with that. But too often we fail to follow Philip's example when he *opened his mouth*.

If you only live for Jesus without sharing Jesus, in the words of Dr. Phil, *"How's that working for ya?"* How many people have come to you and said, *"Please tell me about Jesus!"* because they've seen your example. It's not impossible, but it's exceptionally rare. It's so rare we might call this strategy "unintentional evangelism."

Philip's example reminds us that, at some point, we must open our mouth and actually speak *the good news about Jesus*. This affirms what Paul later wrote in Romans 10:14, *"How are they to call on one they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in one they have not heard of? And how are they to hear without someone [who tells] them?"*

What do we learn about evangelism from Philip? The box above highlights some essential tips that Philip modeled. Of primary importance is to understand the Holy Spirit's role in evangelism. It is not your job to "save" anybody. That's the Spirit's job. You do not fail if a person does not come to faith. You only "fail" if you're not praying and obedient to step out in the power of the Holy Spirit as he gives opportunity.