

Acts 8:26-40

Journeying alongside others

On the road to Gaza, Philip meets an Ethiopian court official who was reading the prophet Isaiah – the passage that begins, ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter’. Prompted by the Spirit, Philip asks the man whether he understands what he is reading. The man says he needs a guide, and Philip uses this as an opportunity to speak about Jesus and the man immediately asks to be baptized. Philip turns back towards Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news everywhere he goes.



Bible notes



Philip is one of seven ‘Hellenists’, Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (appointed ‘to wait on tables’) generously serving God’s community (6:1-6). When the Jerusalem church was persecuted, they were among those ‘scattered’ throughout Judea and Samaria’ (8:1-3). Travelling north to Samaria, Philip proclaimed the good news and baptized (8:4-13). Now God’s messenger tells him to return south, through the wilderness towards Gaza on the coast. There are parallels between Philip’s journey and the risen Jesus’ walk to Emmaus, reminding us that Philip travels with his Lord. As Jesus opens the conversation with a question, ‘What are you discussing?’ (Luke 24:17), so does Philip, ‘Do you understand?’ Both explain the Scriptures, Jesus talking about himself (24:27), and Philip about Jesus. Jesus disappeared as his companions recognised him and they returned to Jerusalem (24:31-33). Philip is spirited away northwards, leaving the African courtier who ‘went on his way rejoicing’. Philip travels with his Lord as he journeys with this Ethiopian treasurer from a country with a Jewish tradition, later claimed to date from the time of the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon. Philip runs beside the chariot, but this high official, wealthy enough to possess a scroll of Scripture, invites Philip to sit beside him. Philip first waits to be asked a question about the passage from Isaiah 53:7-8 before relating it to Jesus. And it is the Ethiopian who asks for baptism and commands his chariot to stop. Their journey together ends as both of them enter and emerge from the waters of death and resurrection.

First impressions

- What topics work well when speaking to strangers?
- Why is it significant that Philip journeyed alongside the Ethiopian eunuch?
- What does this tell us about how we might relate our faith to others?



LISTEN



Play ‘Story of the Cross’, Rend Co. Kids on SPARKLE. POP. RAMPAGE. and reflect on the lyrics. What compels you most about the Christian message?



If someone asked you about your faith journey, what would you say? Spend time thinking about what would be helpful to communicate about faith with others. See if you can share your story with someone this week.

A gathering prayer

God of our journey, guide our path, and make us ready in our encounters with others to learn new things about you – for you are the God of surprises. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Work together, using large cardboard boxes and other ‘junk materials’, to create a chariot or modern-day vehicle. Use blankets and cushions to create a space where you can reflect and chat, when you’ve finished.



Plan a pilgrimage with friends to a local church or special site. Find out about the history of the space and the people connected with it. Allow the things you see and hear to spark conversations about life and faith as you walk.