

PHILIP - TAKING THE GOSPEL BEYOND JERUSALEM

Scripture References: Acts 6:1-7; 8:4-40; 21:8-9

Not That Philip

Let's get this out of the way first: This Philip is not Philip the apostle. This is Philip the evangelist, one of the seven men chosen alongside Stephen to serve the widows in Jerusalem.

But don't let that fool you. Just because Philip wasn't one of the original twelve doesn't mean he was second-rate. In fact, Philip's ministry was so powerful and far-reaching that he became known as "Philip the Evangelist" - one of the most effective preachers of the gospel in the early church.

Philip didn't wait for permission to share Jesus. He didn't wait for the apostles to tell him it was okay. When persecution scattered the believers from Jerusalem, Philip went to Samaria and started preaching.

And everything changed.

To understand how radical Philip's ministry was, you need to understand the hatred between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans were considered half-breeds—descendants of Jews who had intermarried with Gentile's centuries earlier. They had their own version of the Torah and their own worship center on Mount Gerizim. Jews despised them. The feeling was mutual. In fact, most Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee would take the long route around Samaria just to avoid stepping foot in Samaritan territory. That's how deep the hatred ran, but when persecution broke out in Jerusalem after Stephen's death, Philip fled to Samaria—the one place no self-respecting Jew would go.

And there, he preached Jesus.

"Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:5-8)

Think about that. The gospel had been confined to Jerusalem—a Jewish city, for Jewish people. But Philip broke that barrier wide open. He showed that Jesus wasn't just for the Jews. He was for everyone. Even the hated Samaritans. Demons were cast out. Paralyzed people walked. Lame people ran. And an entire city erupted in joy. This was a revival.

Not everyone was thrilled about Philip's success. There was a man in Samaria named Simon who had been performing magic tricks and convincing people he had divine power. The Samaritans called him "the Great Power of God." He was, essentially, a celebrity—the biggest name in town. Until Philip showed up.

When Simon saw the real power of God flowing through Philip, he was amazed. In fact, he believed and was baptized. As we'll see later in the story, Simon's heart wasn't right. He didn't want Jesus. He wanted Jesus' power. And that distinction would become a huge problem.

Right in the middle of Philip's wildly successful ministry in Samaria, God gave him a strange instruction:

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'" (Acts 8:26)

Let's pause here. Philip was in the middle of a revival. People were getting saved. Miracles were happening.

He had momentum. And God told him to leave it all and go to a desert road. Most of us would have argued. "God, don't you see what's happening here? Can't I stay just a little longer? I'm finally making an impact!" But not Philip. He obeyed immediately.

Why? Because Philip understood something we often forget: God's assignments aren't always about the crowds. Sometimes they're about the one. On that desert road, Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch - a high-ranking official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia. He was a Godfearer, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel. He had traveled hundreds of miles to Jerusalem to worship, and now he was heading home.

He was reading the scroll of Isaiah, but he didn't understand it. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah 53—the passage about the suffering servant who would be "led like a lamb to the slaughter."

"Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

"How can I," the eunuch replied, "unless someone explains it to me?"

So, Philip climbed into the chariot and did what he did best: He told the man about Jesus.

And the Ethiopian believed. When they came to some water, the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Philip baptized him right there on the side of the road. And then, in one of the most dramatic exits in Scripture, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch never saw him again. But he went on his way rejoicing.

Some scholars believe the Ethiopian eunuch was the first African convert to Christianity. He likely brought the gospel back to Ethiopia, planting seeds that would grow into one of the oldest Christian traditions in the world. And it all happened because Philip was willing to leave a successful ministry to obey God's voice.

Here's the lesson: God doesn't always call you to the crowds. Sometimes He calls you to the one. Sometimes your most important ministry will happen in a conversation with a stranger, a moment of obedience that seems insignificant at the time.

But God knows what He's doing. He sees the ripple effects of your obedience—even when you don't.

Meanwhile, back in Samaria, Peter and John arrived to lay hands on the new believers so they could receive the Holy Spirit. Simon the Sorcerer watched this happen and made an offer:

"Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:19)
He was offering to pay them. As if God's power could be bought. Peter's response was brutal:

"May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness

and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." (Acts 8:20-23)

This is where we get the term "simony" - the sin of trying to buy spiritual authority or power. Simon had believed, but his heart was wrong. He wanted power, not transformation. He wanted the gifts, not the Giver. And Philip's ministry in Samaria revealed that.

We don't hear much about Philip after Acts 8, but we get one more glimpse of him in Acts 21, when Paul stays at his house in Caesarea:

"Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied." (Acts 21:8-9)

Philip had settled down in Caesarea and raised four daughters who all had the gift of prophecy. Think about that. Philip didn't just evangelize strangers. He raised his children to love God and use their spiritual gifts. That's legacy. That's faithfulness.

Philip's ministry wasn't just about the crowds in Samaria or the Ethiopian eunuch on the desert road. It was about raising up the next generation to carry the gospel forward.

Obedience Over Outcomes

In discipleship, we often want to see results. We want to see lives changed, people saved, and visible fruit from our ministry. But Philip's story teaches us something different: Obedience matters more than outcomes.

Philip didn't know what would happen when he left Samaria to go to a desert road. He didn't know the Ethiopian eunuch would carry the gospel to Africa. He just obeyed. And God did the rest.

Your job as a disciple isn't to see the big picture or control the results. Your job is to take the next step of obedience. To follow God's voice today. To share your faith with the one person He puts in your path. You may never see the full impact of your obedience. But God does. And that's enough.

Discipleship is about faithfulness in the moment, not control of the outcome. It's about saying yes to God's prompting, even when it doesn't make sense. It's about trusting that He's working in ways you can't see.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - PHILIP

1. Philip left Jerusalem during persecution and went to Samaria—a place most Jews avoided. Have you ever felt God calling you to go somewhere or do something that made you uncomfortable? How did you respond?
2. Philip was in the middle of a successful revival in Samaria when God told him to leave and go to a desert road. How would you have responded to that instruction? What does this teach us about God's priorities?

3. The Ethiopian eunuch was searching for truth but needed someone to explain the Scriptures to him. Have you ever been that person for someone else? Have you ever needed someone to explain the gospel to you?

4. Simon the Sorcerer believed and was baptized, but his heart wasn't right. What's the difference between believing in Jesus and truly following Him with a pure heart?

5. Philip raised four daughters who all prophesied. What does this tell us about the importance of discipling the next generation? How can you invest in others, especially young believers?

6. **DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** Philip obeyed God even when it didn't make sense—leaving a successful ministry to go to a desert road. In discipleship, we often have to take steps of faith that seem counterintuitive. How can Philip's example encourage you to obey God's voice even when you don't understand the "why"?

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Philip's example of radical obedience. He left a successful revival to minister to one person on a desert road. He crossed cultural boundaries to share the gospel with an Ethiopian stranger. He followed Your Spirit's leading even when it didn't make sense to human wisdom.

Lord, forgive us when we ignore Your promptings because they seem inconvenient or illogical. Forgive us when we value our comfort over Your call. Help us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction, willing to leave the crowd to minister to the one, ready to share Jesus with anyone You place in our path.

Give us Philip's heart for evangelism—his passion for sharing the good news and his ability to clearly explain the Scriptures. Help us see divine appointments in everyday encounters. Whether You send us across the street or across the world, may we respond with immediate obedience.

Teach us that faithfulness in small things qualifies us for greater things. May we be found faithful wherever You plant us today, trusting that You are orchestrating every divine encounter.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.



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