

A black and white illustration of Jesus and Philip in a chariot. Jesus is on the left, looking towards the right. Philip is on the right, wearing a headband and a patterned vest, looking towards the left. They are both holding scrolls.

Use Week of:

Unit 30 • Session 1

Philip and the Ethiopian

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Acts 8

STORY POINT:

The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE:

Colossians 1:18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 158

TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 160

APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 166



Leaders, grow on the go! Listen to session-by-session training every week on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or LifeWay's Digital Pass:
ministrygrid.com/gospelproject | gospelproject.com/podcasts

LEADER Bible Study

The believers in the early church faced intense persecution. After Stephen was killed, Jesus' followers at the church in Jerusalem scattered; however, they did not stop talking about Jesus. They continued to share the good news. One man, Philip, took the gospel to Samaria. The crowds there listened and believed, and they had great joy.

In today's Bible story, Philip was instructed by an angel of the Lord to go to a certain road in the desert. Philip obeyed. The Spirit led Philip to a chariot, where an Ethiopian official was reading the Scriptures from the prophet Isaiah. The Ethiopian man did not understand what he was reading, so Philip explained it to him.

The man was reading from the prophet Isaiah: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter ... In his humiliation justice was denied him ... For his life is taken from the earth" (Acts 8:32-33). The official wondered if Isaiah was speaking about himself or another person. Philip told the official that Isaiah's words weren't about Isaiah; they were about the Messiah—Jesus! The official believed in Jesus and was baptized.

Guide kids to consider the role of the Holy Spirit in this interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian official. Who was responsible for Philip's going to the desert? Who helped Philip explain the Scriptures? Who changed the heart of the official so he would believe?

After his interaction with the Ethiopian official, Philip continued sharing the gospel in all the towns on his way to the town of Caesarea.

In our mission of making disciples, believers must be willing instruments to be used in the hands of the Lord. Philip didn't go into the desert today with a strategy for converting another man; the Holy Spirit led Philip, and he obeyed. As believers, we can be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and willing to follow His lead. He will go with us.

The BIBLE Story

Philip and the Ethiopian

Acts 8

An angel of the Lord told Philip, a follower of Jesus, **to go to a desert road** between Jerusalem and Gaza. So **Philip went**.

On the road was a man from Ethiopia. He was **an important official to the queen of Ethiopia.** The man had come to worship in Jerusalem, and now he was on his way home. **He sat in his chariot, reading aloud the words of the prophet Isaiah.**

The Holy Spirit told Philip **to go to the chariot**, so Philip ran up to it. “**Do you understand what you are reading?**” Philip asked the man.

The official replied, “**How can I, unless someone explains it to me?**” He invited Philip into his chariot, and Philip sat with him. **The official was reading these words from Isaiah:**

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before its shearer,

so He does not open His mouth.

He was treated unfairly, and His life is taken away.

The official asked, “Was Isaiah talking about himself or someone

else?" **Isaiah was talking about the Messiah, so Philip began to tell the man the good news about Jesus.**

As they traveled down the road, **they came to some water. "What would keep me from being baptized?" the official asked.**

Then the official told the chariot to stop. **He and Philip went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit took Philip away.** The official continued home, and he was very happy.

Christ Connection: The Ethiopian official knew what the Old Testament prophets said, but he did not understand that they spoke about Jesus. The Holy Spirit led Philip to help the official understand the good news about Jesus: Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, just like the Old Testament prophets said.

- **Act it out:** Invite kid volunteers to act out the story as you tell it.

- **Call and Response:**

Instruct the kids to listen for certain words or names, and respond in unison. For example, when you say Philip, they'll say "obeyed," when you say Ethiopian, they'll say "believed," and when you say "Isaiah, they'll say "the prophet."

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Philip and the Ethiopian

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 8

STORY POINT: The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a time they made a new friend.

SAY • Meeting new friends is a great experience. If you meet someone who doesn't know Jesus, sharing the gospel with them is a great way to show them you care about them. Today we will learn about a man named Philip, who went to meet a new friend and help that friend understand the gospel.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "The Desert Road" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "The Desert Road" activity page. Ask the kids to solve the maze to help Philip reach the Ethiopian official.

SAY • Good job solving that maze. Today we will learn about a time Philip went to tell a man about Jesus. He didn't have to walk through a maze, but he was guided to the man! The Holy Spirit led Philip. We'll talk more about that later.

Session starter (10 minutes)

**LOW
PREP**

OPTION 1: Human chariot race

Form groups of three kids. Instruct each group to select two kids to be “horses” and one to be the “driver.” The driver will stand slightly behind the two “horses” and place each hand on a shoulder of each kid. Each group will race to the far end of the room and back without breaking formation. The first group to complete three laps (down and back) wins.

SAY • A chariot is a special cart pulled by a horse or two. In Bible times, they were a quick way to get around, but usually only very important people had them. Today we will learn about a time the Holy Spirit sent Philip to a man riding in a chariot. Who do you think it could have been?

OPTION 2: Follow the leader

Select one kid to be the leader. She will walk around the room making noises and gestures. The other kids will follow behind her in a single file line mimicking all her actions. Every minute or so, rotate to a new leader.

SAY • Follow the leader is fun, and usually pretty easy to play. We will learn today about a time Philip followed the Holy Spirit’s lead. Do you think what he had to do was easy? We’ll learn more about it soon.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Philip and the Ethiopian

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 8

STORY POINT: The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Decorate the room to look like a soccer practice field. Use PVC pipes and netted fabric to simulate a soccer goal. Place orange training cones to one side of the stage, and fill a mesh laundry bag with soccer balls to place at the other end of the area.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Leader enters wearing khaki shorts and a polo shirt, with a whistle hanging from a lanyard around her neck.]

LEADER • Hey everyone, welcome to the field. I'm glad you could all show up for the soccer team try-outs. We lost a lot of players last year when they aged out of our league, so we have tons of openings for great new players to step in.

You know, when I think about it, there's a lot of similarity between a soccer team and a church. Especially when we are recruiting new players. Both a soccer team and a church have to work together well. The members of both have to be willing to

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

listen to their leaders to make sure their job is done well. But one major difference is that a soccer team only has a certain number of slots to fill before they stop recruiting players; Jesus' family is never full, and there's always room for more people who repent and believe the gospel to join the church. That makes me think of a cool story about one man who listened to the Holy Spirit to "recruit" a new believer. Let me tell you all about it.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we get into these new Bible stories, I want to get you thinking about a new big picture question.

Why does the church exist? Remember that the church isn't a building, it's the people; believers who gather to glorify God. But why? Why does God unite believers into the church? Let's think on that question. I'll give you the answer after we hear the story.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • The early church definitely had some struggles. Some members were selfish, like Ananias and Sapphira. Other members were arrested, mistreated, hurt, or even killed because of their faith. But through it all, God was using the struggles to strengthen and grow the church in various ways. All of this was done by the Holy Spirit's power. Today, we will learn about a time one man led another to Jesus. Our story is called "Philip and the Ethiopian."

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- “Philip and the Ethiopian” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Acts 8. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Philip and the Ethiopian.”

LEADER • Sometimes I wish that every opportunity to share the gospel was as easy as walking up to a person and them asking me to help them understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit really set up an incredible situation for Philip. And because Philip obeyed joyfully, the Ethiopian official became a believer!

This story has a lot to teach us about immediate obedience. Philip didn’t make excuses about how far away the desert road was, or how uncomfortable he would feel running up to a stranger’s chariot to talk. Instead, he just obeyed. Jesus’ final command to His disciples was to make disciples and baptize them. The early church took that command very seriously!

As soon as the Ethiopian man believed, he asked to be baptized to show his new faith. His obedience was immediate too. When Philip was carried away by the Spirit, the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. He was headed home, so we can know that he carried the truth of Jesus with him to Ethiopia! All along God’s plan has been to glorify His name through the church. So, *why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.*

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • The Ethiopian official knew what the Old Testament prophets said, but he did not understand that they spoke about Jesus. The Holy Spirit led

Philip to help the official understand the good news about Jesus: Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, just like the Old Testament prophets said.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 30, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why it’s good to have some friends who don’t know Jesus. Guide them to discuss ways they could share the gospel with the lost.

- “Unit 30, Session 1” Questions from Kids video

Missions moment (3 minutes)

Play the “Together” missions video.

- “Together” missions video

LEADER • The Holy Spirit tells people today to go and tell people about Jesus, like He told Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus. When Christians work together to share the gospel, we can reach more people all over the world.

Pray for missionaries all over the world, specifically any missionaries your church supports.

- Key Passage Poster
- “First Place in Everything (Colossians 1:18)” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Colossians 1:18. Then sing the key passage song.

LEADER • Paul wrote this as part of his letter to believers in a city called Colossae. Paul wanted them to be sure they gave Jesus the respect and glory He deserves. He is our greatest treasure, and we exist as a church to tell people about Him.

- “This Is Where the Mission Begins” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Let’s worship God and ask Him to help us live on

mission together.
Sing together “This Is Where the Mission Begins.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, help us to love You most and obey You with joy. Give us courage to share the gospel boldly with everyone we meet. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Philip and the Ethiopian

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 8

STORY POINT: The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster

Say the key passage together as a group multiple times, using different voices each time. Use the suggested voices below or come up with your own.

Suggested voices: high-pitched mouse voice, low-pitched giant voice, pirate voice, robot voice, and so forth.

SAY • Paul often talked about the church as the body. Jesus is the head of the church body! That means He is the most important. He leads and guides us. He is the greatest treasure, and the reason we can be saved.
Why does the church exist? The church exists to glorify God by worshiping Him, showing His love, and telling others about Jesus.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help them find Acts 8. Discuss which division of the Bible Acts is a part of. (*New Testament History*) Explain that Luke wrote the Book of Acts, and it serves almost as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Consider using the New Testament Israel Map to point out Jerusalem and Gaza. (*H5, I2*) Remind kids that Philip met the Ethiopian man on a road between the two places.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why did Philip travel to the spot where he met the Ethiopian official? (*The Holy Spirit told him to, Acts 8:26*)
2. Which prophet's writings was the Ethiopian official reading (*Isaiah's, Acts 8:30*)
3. How did the Ethiopian react to the gospel? (*he believed it and was baptized, Acts 8:36-39*)
4. How can we share the gospel with others? *Guide kids to think about the importance of being prepared to speak about God. Stress the importance of studying God's Word and praying for God to give us opportunities to share. Remind them that the Holy Spirit will guide us and give us wisdom to know what to say. Encourage them to look for ways to speak about the gospel in their everyday lives.*
5. What should we do if someone rejects the gospel?
Help the kids think about how to deal with rejection. Remind them that anyone who rejects the gospel is rejecting God, not us. We should be respectful and kind towards everyone, even those who reject the gospel. God doesn't want us to be discouraged by rejection, but encouraged by His power so that we continue sharing.
6. Other than sharing the gospel, how can we show God's love to others? *Guide kids to think practically. They could help a classmate with homework, sit with someone new at lunch, share a cool toy with a sibling, or volunteer with their families to serve in a shelter or food bank. Help them see that there are many ways to show love, and all of them can lead to sharing the gospel.*

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

SAY • The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus. We can share about Jesus too!

LOW PREP

- flat bedsheets, 2
- playground balls, 2

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Bedsheet bounce

Select a volunteer to compete against the rest of the group. Give both him and all the other kids a flat bedsheet and a playground ball. Challenge the team and the individual to use the bedsheet to toss and catch the ball. The group will spread out around the perimeter of the sheet and hold it taut, using the sheet as a parachute to toss the ball up and catch it. The individual will be unable to manage the task. After a minute or so, allow all the kids to work together to continue tossing the ball.

SAY •That game was much better with friends to help you; playing alone was much harder. That's a little like the Christian life. We all need one another.

Missions is often about working together to do what God has commanded us to do. Churches all over the country give money, pray, and work together to send missionaries to all nations. It's better when we work together!

OPTION 2: Jesus is the lamb

- paper plates, 1 per kid
- cotton balls
- glue sticks

Provide a paper plate and four craft sticks to each kid. Provide the kids with cotton balls and glue sticks. Help the kids draw a face on the plate and glue cotton around the edges so that it looks like a fluffy lamb. On the back of the plate, help the kids write the Story Point and the reference Isaiah 53:7.

SAY •The Holy Spirit led Philip to tell the Ethiopian man about Jesus. The Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah, and he did not understand who was like a lamb let to be slaughtered. Philip explained that Isaiah was writing about Jesus, and then he told the

man about Jesus' death and resurrection. The man believed and was baptized. We can share the gospel just like Philip did, and we can even use our paper plate lambs to help us talk about Jesus.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.