

Lesson 2: Ethiopia: Prepared People  
Sermon Date: January 13th  
Text: Acts 8:26 - 40

1. Share with your group your views on the extent to which coincidences exist in how we, the church, relate to the world around us. Do you notice “coincidences” in your day-to-day life?
  
2. Consider Philip’s journey recorded in Acts 6:1-7 and Acts 8:1 – 40. How was Philip *prepared* for the encounter he has with the Ethiopian eunuch?
  
3. We see in this passage that the eunuch has come from Jerusalem and may have been in the city during Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-11). Based on Acts 2 and this passage, how is the eunuch *prepared* for this encounter with Philip?
  
4. Note the ways God shows up in this passage: prior to the meeting of Philip and the eunuch, during that encounter, and then after the baptism. What does this tell you about how He is involved in your day-to-day activities?
  
5. Does it seem somewhat odd that God whisks Philip away immediately after the baptism? Why do you suppose God (a.) directs Philip elsewhere, and (b.) allows the eunuch to continue his journey alone without further guidance from Philip?
  
6. What do you learn from this passage about how we are to be prepared to be God’s agents in this world?

Getting Started (ideas for how to transition to begin this study):

- This passage begins with an angel coming to Philip with specific instructions, similar to the angelic visits described in the Christmas story (e.g., angels coming to Zechariah, Joseph, and Mary). Later (v. 29), Philip receives specific instruction from the Spirit. How have you experienced God giving you specific guidance?

Digging Deeper (optional material to consider):

- The phrase “angel of the Lord” is used four other times in Acts: (1) Stephen speaks of him (7:30-38); (2) he guides Philip (8:26); (3) he liberates Peter (12:7-10); (4) he strikes down Herod (12:23). See also Mt 1:20-24; 2:13,19; 28:2; Lk 1:11-38; 2:9.
- Ethiopia corresponded in this period to Nubia, from the upper Nile region at the first cataract (Aswan) to Khartoum.
- The term “Candace” was the traditional title of the queen mother in Ethiopia, responsible for performing the secular duties of the reigning king, who was thought to be too sacred for such activities.
- Apparently, it was a fairly common practice for people to read out loud in public. This created the opportunity to strike up a conversation when you heard something that sounded interesting. Compare this to today as people in public places are connected to iPods, talking on cell phones, and punching away on laptops. Do you feel these people are approachable?