

Aim of lesson

To show that God cares for each individual and wants each of us to know and accept his gospel of salvation.

Bible background

Acts 8:26-40.

Outline of lesson

Just one man

Ask the class if they remember the lesson about Philip preaching in Samaria. Remind the class of the crowds there who had accepted the gospel. Ask the class if they can remember how many were baptised on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). See also Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7. Large numbers of people accepted the gospel, but that did not mean God was not concerned with each of them as individuals. Today's lesson is about the gospel reaching just one man.

See, here is water ...

Ask the class to look at the pictures in the workbook and be ready to identify the people and happenings as you read Acts 8:26-40 together. This passage is a good one for reading by different characters. Ask four members of your class to read the parts of: narrator, angel, Philip and Ethiopian. You could include a separate voice, speaking for God, for the words of v29, or the 'angel' could say these words too. You may like to ask the class to prepare their parts by reading them beforehand.

Using the workbook, go through the story again, discussing what is happening. You may like to ask the class about Philip's thoughts. Did he wonder at God sending him away – especially to go to the desert road – when there were so many people in Samaria accepting Christ and being baptised? He may have wondered, but he did not hesitate. Have the class focus on Philip and what he learned during that day about the importance to God of each individual, and the unimportance of race or colour.

Baptised into his death

Change the focus to look again at what happened from the point of view of the Ethiopian. What had he already believed in, and what did he now learn from Philip? Have the class consider in some detail why he asked to be baptised. Bring out that it was part of the gospel that Philip preached. It was the way he could accept the death of Christ for himself – to cover his own sins. The death of Christ is what he had been reading about in the book of Isaiah without understanding it. You may like to include something of your feelings about the personal individual decision you took to be baptised, and what it meant to become a child of God.

He went on his way rejoicing

The class could complete the words for the pictures on the worksheet. Some can be found in the passage, and others will be the class' ideas about what they might have said. The last picture will be the Ethiopian's words of rejoicing or a prayer he might have said after Philip had left.

The things Philip taught

Now ask the students to note in their workbooks the things Philip said when he was teaching the Ethiopian. Verses 5,12,14, 25, 35 and 40 give different headings to describe what he preached, and from the narrative there are subjects such as baptism (of adults, v12; by immersion, v36-39); trust in the Scriptures, and an acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, v35. Peter brings in repentance, prayer, forgiveness and the grace of God in v20-22. Perhaps the class can find others. The second space is for the class to write a more personal conclusion of what they have learned about how much it matters to God that they individually accept his message.

Digging deeper

Ethiopians

This section looks at Ethiopians in the Bible: where they came from geographically and historically, and God's attitude to colour.

Relevance to our lives

It would be very helpful to take the class to witness a baptism, or to talk to someone recently baptised about their decision.

Prayer

The class could write what the Ethiopian might have prayed at the end of this day. If they have done this on the worksheet they might be encouraged to write a personal prayer about God's interest in them as individuals.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could write a modern day version of what happened on the road to Gaza. A government official could be met on his journey and have the same gospel preached to him. This could be recorded as a radio play.
- The class could invent an acrostic on the name PHILIP, for example:
 - **P**reached in Samaria
 - **H**eaded an angel speak to him
 - **I**mmediately left for the Gaza road
 - **L**et the Ethiopian know the gospel

- Immersed him in water to baptise him
- **P**reached in the towns as far as Caesarea.