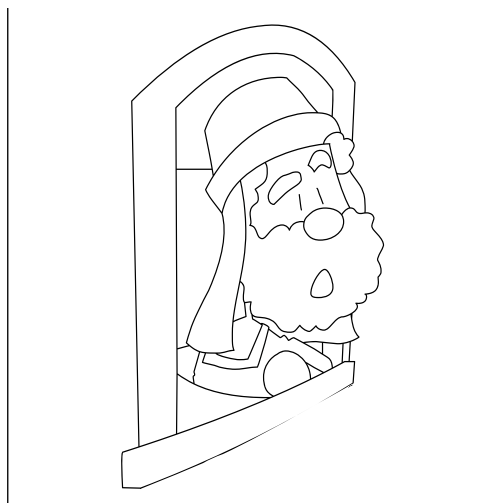


# Philip and the Ethiopian Official



## Colour me!



## Acts 8:26-40

The Lord's angel said to Philip, "Go south along the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." So Philip left. An important Ethiopian official happened to be going along that road in his chariot. He was the chief treasurer for Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia. The official had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was now on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot, reading the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot. Philip ran up close and heard the man reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The official answered, "How can I understand unless someone helps me?" He then invited Philip to come up and sit beside him. The man was reading the passage that said, "He was led like a sheep on its way to be killed. He was silent as a lamb whose wool is being cut off, and he did not say a word. He was treated like a nobody and did not receive a fair trial. How can he have children, if his life is snatched away?"

The official said to Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or about someone else?" So Philip began at this place in the Scriptures and explained the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. The official said, "Look! Here is some water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. Then they both went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. After they had come out of the water, the Lord's Spirit took Philip away. The official never saw him again, but he was very happy as he went on his way. Philip later appeared in Azotus. He went from town to town, all the way to Caesarea, telling people about Jesus.

## Commentary

Like Stephen, Philip had been chosen to look after the fast-growing church in Jerusalem. However, after Stephen's murder, many disciples left the city, fearing what would happen next. This might have looked like a setback, but in fact it meant that the story of Jesus started to spread among the towns and villages. Philip travelled up to Samaria, but suddenly God had new work for him to do, not with a large crowd but with just one person.

The Ethiopian treasurer was clearly someone who had chosen to become Jewish even though he was not Jewish by birth. This is why he had travelled up to Jerusalem for one of the festivals there. He was also a devout man, determined to understand the Jewish Scriptures better. The passage he was looking at comes from Isaiah and is about someone having to suffer like a lamb being led to the slaughter. This was Philip's God-given opportunity to tell the treasurer how Jesus had been killed and had come back to life so that everyone could be forgiven. The treasurer was baptized there and then went on his way rejoicing. He then took the news about Jesus back to his home country.

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## Questions

- ▶ How do you think Philip felt about being taken away from his successful work in Samaria to wait around on a lonely desert road?
- ▶ How had God been preparing the Ethiopian treasurer to hear the good news about Jesus?
- ▶ Can you guess what sort of things Philip might have said to the treasurer?
- ▶ What can we learn from the way God used Philip to do his work?



## Visual aid

The words of Isaiah that the treasurer was reading would have been written on a scroll. Attach the two ends of a roll of paper to two rolling pins and practice unrolling the paper from one end to the other so that the words of the text travel in between.



## Activity idea

The treasurer's chariot was probably quite a grand vehicle. Using a chair covered with colourful fabric, some small open umbrellas or large circles of card for wheels, plenty of gold decorative extras and some lengths of leather or string to be the reins and harnesses for the horses, make your own version of the chariot. If you have lots of cardboard boxes available, you could have a go at making some junk box horses.



## Prayer idea

Use four fingers and a thumb to represent some of the ways God speaks by his Holy Spirit—through words or pictures in our head; the advice of friends; the way circumstances turn out; a Bible story; a sense of inner peace about what to do. Hold each digit with the other hand, and ask God to help you hear his voice better day by day.

## Key verse

So Philip began at this place in the Scriptures and explained the good news about Jesus (Acts 8:35).

## Old Testament story link

1 Kings 18:41-46: Elijah was someone else who listened carefully to God and also once had to outrun a chariot!



Colour me!

