



Forgotten God

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Acts 8.26-40 | June 27, 2021
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our series Forgotten God. As we have seen through the previous five weeks, the Holy Spirit serves us in many ways. Recall what we have learned together: The Holy Spirit indwells our very bodies (**Acts 2**), gives us life when the world drains it (**John 6**), brings forth fruit from the seeds of faith (**Galatians 5**), gives us gifts to build each other up (**1st Corinthians 12**), and guides us into truth (**John 14**). How tragic, then, if we forget the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives! (Missed one of these messages? Click onto gspc.org/recent-messages)

In this final week of our series, we will see how the Holy Spirit sends us out to share the gospel with those who may be different than us.

II. Connecting with One Another

Our world is filled with barriers – both literal and figurative. What barriers can you think of? What purpose do they serve – positively or negatively?

III. Study the Text

a. Read **Acts 8.26-29**.

Philip (first introduced in **Acts 6.1-7**), is sent to a desert road that spanned 60 miles, connecting Jerusalem to Gaza (the Ethiopia of the first-century corresponded to this “Upper Nile” region of Africa’s continent, in modern day Egypt and Sudan). On his way, Philip meets a man returning to the Upper Nile from Jerusalem. In all likelihood, this man was Jewish, either by birth or conversion. While **Deuteronomy 23.1** forbade this man from entering “the assembly,” **Isaiah 56.1-5** promises his inclusion in temple worship.

What does Isaiah list as requirements for his being incorporated into the community of faith?

b. Philip and this Ethiopian eunuch have some things in common, but there are a lot of differences, too. List as many potential differences as you notice. If you’re meeting in a group, spend some time discussing the benefits and challenges of these differences.

c. In verse 29, the Spirit of the Lord gives Philip one very specific command.

What is it? Have you ever received similar instruction from God? How did you respond?

d. Read **Acts 8.30-31**.

In verse 29, the Holy Spirit instructs him with one command, but Philip takes it further. What else does he do? What motivated him to do so?

e. John Calvin wrote that the Ethiopian eunuch “acknowledges his ignorance freely and frankly,” juxtaposing this man with others who are “swollen-headed with confidence in



[their] own abilities"! He continues, "That is also why the reading of Scripture bears fruit with such a few people today, because scarcely one in a hundred is to be found who gladly submits himself to teaching."

What do you think of John Calvin's insight? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

(Time permitting, juxtapose the similarities of this account with the Stranger who joined travelers and explained the Scriptures to them in **Luke 24.13-35**.)

f. Read **Acts 8.32-35**.

The Ethiopian eunuch is reading from the scroll of Isaiah, a passage now known as the Suffering Servant psalm, found in **Isaiah 52.13-53.12**. Before continuing, read that passage in its entirety, noting the many prophecies regarding the life, death, and resurrection (verse 11!) of Jesus.

As we read that passage now, we clearly see the foreshadowing of Jesus, though no one in the first-century expected a suffering Messiah. Instead, they presumed a triumphant Messiah who would vanquish the Jews' enemies and expel them from the Holy Land. And yet, Jesus did apply this psalm to himself, redefining the hopes for a Messiah (see **Mark 10.45, 14.24, and Luke 22.37**).

What perspectives about His identity would Jesus redefine in our culture?

g. John Chrysostom writes, "One has reason to admire this eunuch. He did not see Christ, he saw no miracle... How came he to behave thus? His soul was earnest. Yet the thief (on the cross) had seen miracles: the wise men had seen a star; but this man, nothing of the kind. So great a thing is the careful reading of the Scriptures!"

How could you increasingly commit yourself to a 'careful reading of the Scriptures'?

What could doing so challenge or change in your life?

h. Read **Acts 8.36-40**.

The eunuch's question in the original text (verse 36), was so sudden that later scribes added in an interaction you may find in a footnote: Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Why do you think later scribes felt the need to add this exchange?

i. What do you think "stands in the way" of people committing to Jesus in our culture?

j. Spend some time in quiet, sitting in the presence of God, listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit. Whose "chariot" could you "stay near" and look for opportunities to engage in spiritual conversation?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to reveal someone you could befriend in a meaningful way and point to Jesus,
- b. Pray that we, as a community, would be committed to a "careful reading of the Scriptures,"
- c. Lift up the leaders of Good Shepherd, that – like Philip – they would "open up, explain, expound and apply the Scriptures."

