**Lesson 9**

**Acts 8:4-40 Philip**

*In last week’s lesson we saw Stephen facing his accusers. He gives a speech that condemned Jewish leaders who had rejected Moses and the prophets in the past. He implied that God can be worshipped anywhere, not just in the Temple. Stephen accuses them of rejecting the Messiah and crucifying Him and of failing to keep the Torah. He looked up and reported that he saw a vision of the “Son of Man” at the right hand of the Father. These words enraged the crowd and Stephen was taken away and stoned to death. Saul, the man who will later be known as Paul, watched over the cloaks of those stoning Stephen. Stephen’s last words ask for forgiveness of his attackers, just before he gave up his Spirit. As Chapter 8 begins, we read that Saul had begun active persecutions of Christians.*

1. **When did you feel closest to God this week? Was there a particular verse or lesson in Acts 8 that enlightened or inspired you in some way?**
2. **More than one Philip are spoken of in the New Testament. Commentaries suggest that *this* Philip was one of the 72 mentioned in Luke 10:1. Read Luke 10:1, Acts 6:5, Acts 8:5-15, Acts 8:26-39 and Acts 21:8-9. What do we know about this Philip?**

**Acts 6:3-53**Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, **4**whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” **5**The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

**Acts 8:5-15** **5**Thus Philip went down to [the] city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. **6**With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. **7**For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. **8**There was great joy in that city.**9**A man named Simon used to practice magic in the city and astounded the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great. **10**All of them, from the least to the greatest, paid attention to him, saying, “This man is the ‘Power of God’ that is called ‘Great.’” **11**They paid attention to him because he had astounded them by his magic for a long time, **12**but once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized. **13**Even Simon himself believed and, after being baptized, became devoted to Philip; and when he saw the signs and mighty deeds that were occurring, he was astounded.

**Acts 8:26-39 26**Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, “Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route.” **27**So he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, **28**and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29**The Spirit said to Philip, “Go and join up with that chariot.” **30**[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+8&version=NABRE" \l "fen-NABRE-31526i" \o "See footnote i)]Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” **31**He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him. **32**This was the scripture passage he was reading:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
        so he opened not his mouth. **33**In (his) humiliation justice was denied him.  
    Who will tell of his posterity?  
      For his life is taken from the earth.”

**34**Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, “I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this? About himself, or about someone else?” **35**Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him. **36**As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?” [**37**] **38**Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him. **39**When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing. **40**Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

**Acts 21:8-98**On the next **day we** resumed the trip and came to Caesarea, where **we** went to the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him. **9**He had four virgin daughters gifted with prophecy.

1. **Samaritans were considered enemies of the Jews, traitors, or “unclean defilers of the Torah” in the first century. With this in mind, what do the actions of Philip towards the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch say about Philip’s character and/or of the role of the Holy Spirit in his ministry?**
2. **Reflection: Healers and magicians were not uncommon in first century. What are the differences between the works of Simon the Sorcerer and the works associated with Philip and the Apostles? See Acts 8:9-13 above.**
3. **Baptism is a sacrament of initiation into the Jewish-Christian Community and remains one today in the Church. In the Catholic Church, Confirmation is “part 2” of Baptism. Read Catechism #1315 and 1316 below. How does Acts 8:14-17 support the practices of both Baptism and Confirmation?**

**CCC 1315** "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (*Acts*8:14-17).

**CCC 1316** Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

1. **What is simony? How does the word apply to Simon the Sorcerer? See Catechism #2121 and Acts 8:18-24.**

**CCC** [**2121**](javascript:openWindow('cr/2121.htm');) *Simony*is defined as the buying or selling of spiritual things.53 To Simon the magician, who wanted to buy the spiritual power he saw at work in the apostles, St. Peter responded: "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!"54 Peter thus held to the words of Jesus: "You received without pay, give without pay."55 It is impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master, for they have their source in God. One can receive them only from him, without payment.

**Acts 8:18-24 18**When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money **19**and said, “Give me this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay my hands may receive the holy Spirit.” **20**But Peter said to him, “May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money. **21**You have no share or lot in this matter, for your heart is not upright before God. **22**Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your intention may be forgiven. **23**For I see that you are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of iniquity.” **24**Simon said in reply, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

1. **What do we know about the Ethiopian Eunuch? See Acts 8:26-39 above and foot notes in your Bible. See also Deuteronomy 23:2 and Leviticus 21:16-21 below.**

**Deuteronomy 23:2 2**No one whose testicles have been crushed or whose penis has been cut off may come into the assembly of the Lord.

**Leviticus 21:16-2116**The Lord said to Moses: **17**Say to Aaron: None of your descendants, throughout their generations, who has any blemish shall come forward to offer the food of his God. **18**Anyone who has any of the following blemishes may not come forward: he who is blind, or lame, or who has a split lip, or a limb too long, **19**or a broken leg or arm, **20**or who is a hunchback or dwarf or has a growth in the eye, or who is afflicted with sores, scabs, or crushed testicles. **21**No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any such blemish may draw near to offer the oblations of the Lord; on account of his blemish he may not draw near to offer the food of his God.

1. **What is significant about the text that the Ethiopian was reading in Acts 8:26-40? Read Isaiah 53:4-8 below.**

**Isaiah 53:4-8**

Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured.  
We thought of him as stricken,  
    struck down by God[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53&version=NABRE#fen-NABRE-22650b)] and afflicted,  
**5**But he was pierced for our sins,  
    crushed for our iniquity.  
He bore the punishment that makes us whole,  
    by his wounds we were healed.  
**6**We had all gone astray like sheep,  
    all following our own way;  
But the Lord laid upon him[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53&version=NABRE#fen-NABRE-22652c)]  
    the guilt of us all.

***7Though harshly treated, he submitted  
    and did not open his mouth;  
Like a lamb led to slaughter  
    or a sheep silent before shearers,  
    he did not open his mouth.  
8Seized and condemned, he was taken away.  
    Who would have thought any more of his destiny?***

1. **Why did the Ethiopian want to be baptized? Who was it who baptized him?**

**See Acts 8:34-40.**

1. **Reflection: Why do you think Philip was “snatched away”? See Acts 8:39.**