

Overview

Biblical Passage Acts 8:26–40

Supporting Passages Isaiah 53:7–8; Acts 1:8; Matthew 3:13–17, 28:19; John 1:1–50

Memory Verse Acts 8:30

Biblical Truth Philip was willing for God to use him anytime and anywhere.

Context Phillip’s lack of hesitation to go into the desert even though he didn’t know why he was going there is evidence of a willing and trusting heart that is useful to God. In Living Loud, we have looked at different characters of Scripture who made themselves available to God under all circumstances. This week we will consider what it means to be part of God’s mission that calls us to be ready at a moment’s notice. Philip’s willingness to be available to God may have had a great impact on the Kingdom of God on an entirely different continent.

Learning Goals

- **Explore:** Students will learn that God wants them to be available to Him in any situation.
- **Transform:** Students will identify potential opportunities in their daily lives to be on mission with God.

Prayer Suggestions

As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.

- Pray that your students will know and recognize the voice of the Spirit as He speaks to them.
- Pray that your students, like Philip, will be open to the leading of the Spirit in their lives regardless of how far it takes them out of their comfort zones.
- Pray that your students will make immediate obedience to the instruction of the Spirit a habit in their lives.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

The book of Acts is a historical account of the beginnings of the early Church and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, primarily among the Gentiles. It is also an account of how God broke down barriers that had previously existed between God and the whole of humanity as well as between Jews and Gentiles.

Scholars widely recognize Luke as the author of Acts, although Luke never identifies himself as such within the book. The acceptance of the book of Acts as the second volume of a two-part series—the Gospel of Luke is the first installment—leads to the recognition of Luke’s authorship. Both books are addressed to Theophilus and carry the same literary style. We know that Luke: 1) was an associate of the apostle Paul, 2) was present during Paul’s imprisonment when he wrote Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy, and 3) was a physician.

During the time period of this passage, the Church had begun facing persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen. The believers scattered outside of Jerusalem into the surrounding parts of Judea and up into Samaria. It was while preaching and performing miracles in Samaria that God redirected Philip’s focus. We see more of the unfolding of Christ’s command that his disciples would be witnesses throughout the world from Jerusalem onward (Acts 1:8).

Importance

This passage teaches the Essential Truth that **The Church is God's Plan**. Jesus told the early believers that the Spirit would come to them and that they would be empowered to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). After the martyrdom of Stephen, intense persecution broke out against the Church. The believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), causing the gospel to be spread beyond Jerusalem.

Philip’s witness to the Ethiopian eunuch reveals the outward movement of the gospel. The gospel was meant to be shared with Gentiles as well as Jews. At the very most, the Ethiopian eunuch was a Jewish proselyte, one brought into the Jewish faith from a Gentile position. Perhaps the Church in Africa today may look to its origins in the Ethiopian eunuch who carried the gospel home with him.

This passage also teaches the Essential Truth that **People are God's Treasure**.

Interpretation

Acts 8:26 While many commentators think that the word **angel** is used interchangeably throughout this passage with “Spirit,” it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a messenger in human form was sent by God to speak to **Philip**. In any case, Philip received a message from God.

Philip was instructed to go to the 60-mile stretch of road between Jerusalem and Gaza. Gaza was the last water source before entering the desert en route to Egypt. Grammatically, the word *desert* could refer to either the road or the literal place. It could well be a reference to the deserted city of Gaza, which was destroyed in 93 B.C., as opposed to the new Gaza City, which had been built on the coastline just a little further south.

Acts 8:27 Here, Ethiopia referred to the Nubian kingdom in the Nile region just south of Egypt, rather than modern-day Ethiopia. It is the Old Testament Cush. Candace was the official title carried by the queen mothers of Ethiopia who usually acted as the main administrators for this kingdom.

It is not known whether this man was a Jewish proselyte (an outsider accepted into the Jewish religion) or a God-fearing Gentile. The term **eunuch** in this time referred to both men who had been castrated as well as a common title for those serving in official court positions. As a true eunuch, he would have been prevented by Jewish law from entering into the Jewish congregation (Deut. 23:1). Whether he was a Jewish proselyte or a seeking Gentile, the eunuch had just made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Acts 8:28 Whether the eunuch had been allowed to enter into the Temple to worship is unclear. However, he took the initiative to continue to learn more about God through the study of the Jewish Scriptures as he read through the book of Isaiah.

Acts 8:29 As an important court official, the eunuch would undoubtedly have traveled with an entourage. The exotic group most likely caught Philip’s attention. The Spirit soon made it clear that this spectacle was no idle curiosity but rather was Philip’s purpose for coming to this place. It undoubtedly required courage on Philip’s part to approach such a distinguished group.

Acts 8:30 Philip ran up to the chariot. His obedience to the directive of the Spirit was immediate. The eunuch was reading aloud. This was quite common, as the scroll script was crowded and difficult to read. Philip immediately recognized the importance of the passage that the eunuch was reading. He wanted to see what the eunuch understood about the **Suffering Servant**.

Acts 8:31 The eunuch revealed his own lack of knowledge on the topic. That is perhaps not so unusual for one of that time period. It was often thought that only those who had received special instruction in the Scriptures were able to interpret them for others. However, for one of such an important position to openly admit ignorance and request help displayed both humility and a teachable spirit. His desire for truth led him to extend an invitation to Philip to join him.

Acts 8:32-33 The text that the eunuch was reading was from the **Septuagint**, which was an even more difficult translation to understand than the original Hebrew. The passage was one of four Suffering Servant songs located in the book of Isaiah. The eunuch was reading the passage from Isaiah 53:7-8.

Acts 8:34 The eunuch desired to understand that which he was reading. Exactly whom did this passage talk about? Perhaps questions about the verses were raised in his mind during his time of worship in Jerusalem. Had he possibly come across some of the apostles teaching in the Temple?

Acts 8:35 Philip began his witness based upon the questions of the eunuch and from that point shared the Good News of Jesus. This event is the first time recorded in the New Testament that Jesus was equated with the Suffering Servant from Isaiah's writings. Philip pointed out how this passage spoke primarily of the suffering, humiliation, and exaltation of Christ.

Acts 8:36 Although a full account of Philip's witness to the eunuch is not provided, it must have included teaching concerning the importance of baptism. As Philip and the eunuch approached a body of water, the eunuch asked, "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" Although we have no biblical evidence, it is possible that the eunuch had sought to become a proselyte while in Jerusalem, which would have involved a baptismal ceremony. If he were an emasculated eunuch, it is quite conceivable that he had been denied such an opportunity. The way in which he phrases his question—it is translated in the KJV as "What is to prevent me from being baptized?"—indicates that he may have encountered hindrances before. He wanted to know whether he would encounter hindrances with Jesus too. Philip's response was to take him down to the water and baptize him, immediately. Once again we see the barriers of the Old Testament Law fall before the grace found in Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:37 This verse has been left out of the NIV translation because it is not included in the earliest manuscripts. It was most likely a common confession utilized among the early Church for believers during baptism.

Acts 8:38 The eunuch eagerly depicted the transformation of his life through the act of baptism. The word **baptized**, which is used here, always indicates a submersion or immersion.

Acts 8:39 Once Philip and the eunuch came out of the water, "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away." The verb used here means "to snatch up," "to catch up," or "to seize." Some scholars suggest that this indicates a miraculous transportation, such as that experienced by Elijah in 1 Kings 18:12. Others argue that it simply depicts the strong urging by the Spirit for Philip to leave. Although the eunuch did not see Philip again, he continued on his way with joy, which is one of the "fruit of the Spirit" listed in Galatians 5:22.

Acts 8:40 Azotus was a coastal town in the Gaza region to the north of the city of Gaza. From there Philip preached in towns along the coast as he made his way up to Caesarea. Although God changed his location once again, his mission remained the same: preaching Jesus wherever he went.

Implications

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch dramatically reveals a man who was attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and willing to be used as the Spirit's instrument whenever and wherever. Philip's life had already been disrupted by the persecution within Jerusalem, which had driven him out to Samaria in the first place. Instead of serving the believers within the Church, he was thrust out among non-believers, where he was preaching and performing miracles among a people who were regarded by the Jews as marginal at best. Is it any wonder that God chose a man of this character to be his instrument in the confrontation with the Ethiopian eunuch? How are you at dealing with unexpected turns in your life path? Are you willing to allow God to use you in ways that don't fit with your plans and in places that you never dreamed of finding yourself?

God's call to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch required Philip to step out of his comfort zone in many ways. Philip

was led 125 miles into the desert on foot. He had no idea of where exactly he was going or the specific purpose for which he was going. Philip was simply spiritually open enough to understand what God was saying to him and be obedient in his actions. How can you help your students develop an ability to tune in to the voice of God's Spirit? How can we encourage and train one another to develop the habit of immediate obedience to God's instruction even when that instruction isn't based on complete understanding?

Teaching Plan

Connect Activity

Review Questions: Nehemiah: Rising to the Challenge

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the “Review Questions” activity sheet. Print one copy for your own use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide context for today’s lesson.

Media Option: Love Letter

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

Students will watch a video about a guy who reconsiders about all that he would do for a girl.

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb Media Pass or the Reverb DVD, preview and arrange to show the “Love Letter” video. (If your church has not purchased the Reverb Media Pass, you can purchase this single video through the “Media” tab.)

Play the video for your students. When the video is over, ask students what they thought about the video. Then say: **The guy in the video told Amanda that he would do anything for her. Then he thought about it and reconsidered. And it was probably the right call. There just aren’t that many people worth doing anything at any time for. However, we’re called to live our lives for God in this exact same way. Today we’ll learn about how Philip made himself available for God anytime and anywhere.**

Drama: Anytime. Anywhere.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will watch a drama about the numerous opportunities that people have to be a witness for Christ.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the drama script. Prior to the session, enlist two students to enact the drama. Give copies of the script to cast members ahead of time so that they will be ready to perform it.

Prompt students to perform the drama. Afterward, say: **So often we think that whatever God wants to do through our lives is set sometime in the future. Have you ever considered that God wants you to be ready for whatever He wants to assign you today, in five minutes, or in three years?** Then say: **God wants us to be ready to move with Him anytime and anywhere. Ask: Are you ready?**

Explore Activity

Master Teacher Key Study: Anytime, Anywhere

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Acts 8:26-40 to understand Philip's obedience in witnessing to the Ethiopian eunuch.

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the Master Teacher Key Study. Print one copy for your own use. Also download the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Print a copy for each learner. Also provide pens.

Learning Goal: Students will learn that God wants them to be available to Him in any situation.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Acts 8:26-40.

Transform Activity

Deeper Discussion

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the awesome responsibility of sharing the Good News.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Learning Goal: Students will identify potential opportunities in their daily lives to be on mission with God.

Ask: Whose job is it to share the Good News with those who don't know about Jesus? After responses, ask: How do these people qualify for such an important responsibility? Help students think in concrete terms about being available to the Holy Spirit's prompting by brainstorming opportunities to share the Good News. Ask: How does the Holy Spirit get your attention to let you know when and with whom you should share the Good news? Close by asking: Who shares the Good News when you don't?

Creative Prayer

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will pray for opportunities to share their faith at various locations in their city.

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Provide a city map and stickers.

Learning Goal: Students will identify potential opportunities in their daily lives to be on mission with God.

Display the map. Put a sticker on the area representing the church (or wherever this Bible study is being held). Allow students to put additional stickers on the map to represent their schools, their work places, their favorite hangouts, their homes, and other significant locations. Then invite students to gather around the map for a time of prayer. Remind them that each dot represents a place where they can be on mission with God. Challenge them to be on the lookout for opportunities to speak up for God. Pray specifically for a deeper awareness of the needs around them both at these places and as they travel between them.

Reverb Student Book Option: No Excuses

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb student book, preview the activity on page 244. If possible, provide a copy of the book to reference as you mention the activity to students.

Learning Goal: Students will identify potential opportunities in their daily lives to be on mission with God.

As students work through pages 264–269 in the *Reverb* student book this week, challenge them to take about 10–15 minutes and read through the “No Excuses” activity on page 244. Ask: **If you took stock of all of your so-called failures in life, what excuses might you use for giving up on any opportunity that might come along? What excuses do you use for not taking advantage of the opportunities that God gives you to be on mission with Him?**

Living Loud 5, "Philip: Anytime, Anywhere"

Review Questions

1. What did Nehemiah go to Jerusalem to do?
 - a. mourn the destruction of the city
 - b. pray for those who had been in exile for 70 years
 - c. rebuild the city
 - d. bring back a report for King Artaxerxes about the condition of the city

2. Who helped Nehemiah accomplish his task?
 - a. nobody helped him
 - b. slaves
 - c. Sanballat and his men
 - d. some of the Jews

3. What job did Nehemiah perform for King Artaxerxes?
 - a. chaplain
 - b. baker
 - c. cupbearer
 - d. doctor

4. How did many others treat Nehemiah and his helpers while they were working on the city wall?
 - a. They brought them lunch every day along with something cold to drink.
 - b. They ridiculed and criticized them.
 - c. They offered to drop what they were doing and help.
 - d. They threatened to tear down what Nehemiah had built.

5. Why were the enemies of Nehemiah and his helpers afraid once the wall had been rebuilt?
 - a. They were afraid because they believed that the work had been accomplished with God's help.
 - b. They were afraid that the wall was not well built and would crash onto their loved ones.
 - c. They were afraid that Nehemiah had supporters who would come and raid the land and kill all of his enemies.
 - d. They were afraid of what the king would say.

Living Loud 5, "Philip: Anytime, Anywhere"

Answers

1. What did Nehemiah go to Jerusalem to do? (*Lesson 4*)
 - a. mourn the destruction of the city
 - b. pray for those who had been in exile for 70 years
 - c. rebuild the city**
 - d. bring back a report for King Artaxerxes about the condition of the city

2. Who helped Nehemiah accomplish his task? (*Lesson 4*)
 - a. nobody helped him
 - b. slaves
 - c. Sanballat and his men
 - d. some of the Jews**

3. What job did Nehemiah perform for King Artaxerxes? (*Lesson 4*)
 - a. chaplain
 - b. baker
 - c. cupbearer**
 - d. doctor

4. How did many others treat Nehemiah and his helpers while they were working on the city wall? (*Lesson 4*)
 - a. They brought them lunch every day along with something cold to drink.
 - b. They ridiculed and criticized them.**
 - c. They offered to drop what they were doing and help.
 - d. They threatened to tear down what Nehemiah had built.

5. Why were the enemies of Nehemiah and his helpers afraid once the wall had been rebuilt? (*Lesson 4*)
 - a. They were afraid because they believed that the work had been accomplished with God's help.**
 - b. They were afraid that the wall was not well built and would crash onto their loved ones.
 - c. They were afraid that Nehemiah had supporters who would come and raid the land and kill all of his enemies.
 - d. They were afraid of what the king would say.

Living Loud 5, "Philip: Anytime, Anywhere"
Drama

Anytime. Anywhere.

Characters:

ONE
TWO

Props: No props are needed.

Costumes: Both ONE and TWO should wear simple, nondescript clothes.

Creative Note: This is a presentation-style drama. Consider using some kind of text graphics to back up the presentation.

(ONE and TWO stand in nondescript clothes on a nondescript stage)

ONE: Anytime.

TWO: Anywhere.

ONE: Any place.

TWO: Any moment.

ONE: Could be right here.

TWO: In this very room.

ONE: And right now.

TWO: At this very second.

BOTH: Or not.

ONE: Maybe it's tomorrow.

TWO: Or the next day.

ONE: Or next week.

TWO: Or next month.

ONE: Or next year.

TWO: Or decades from now.

ONE: Perhaps it's the next room.

TWO: Or next door.

ONE: Or across the street.

TWO: Or down the block.

ONE: Or across the country.

TWO: Or around the world.

BOTH: Like we said . . .

ONE: Could be anytime.

TWO: And could be anywhere.

ONE: But there will be a time.

TWO: And there will be a place.

ONE: A moment.

TWO: A location.

ONE: Where you have the chance.

TWO: Where you have the opportunity.

BOTH: To be used by God.

ONE: Anytime.

TWO: Anywhere.

ONE: And what's even more.

TWO: What's even better.

ONE: Is that there's not just one time.

TWO: And not just one place.

ONE: There are many moments that occur in your life.

TWO: And many locations to which you will go.

ONE: Any number of times.

TWO: Any number of places.

BOTH: Where God is already at work.

ONE: And where you have the chance.

TWO: Where you have the opportunity.

BOTH: To join Him.

ONE: Anytime.

TWO: Anywhere.

(The End)

Master Teacher Key Study

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Intro: How often do we miss out on an opportunity to do something because we weren't ready?

Description: God knew whom to call on to meet the Ethiopian eunuch in the desert between Jerusalem and Gaza. It would take one who was available to go for Him at a minute's notice and without argument—it would take Philip.

Illustration: Pretend that it's the night of the NFL draft, and Mark Ingram or Colt McCoy is huddled with his family and agent as he anticipates the phone call that will determine what professional football team he plays for in the near future. But what if that player forgot to charge his cell phone? When the call finally comes, it would go straight to voicemail and he would miss his window of opportunity? The coach on the other end of the line might assume that he wasn't interested and then move on to his next choice.

1. Obedience puts us in the place of opportunity (Acts 8:26–29).

Description: In the early Church, the apostles and other followers stayed busy spreading the gospel message. One man, Philip, was actively "proclaiming Christ" in Samaria and seeing revival take place (Acts 8:4–8). But God had additional plans for Philip.

Illustration: Have you ever wondered about how the teenager Billy Graham grew up to be the evangelist Billy Graham? What if he hadn't responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting to become a believer? or to attend Bible college? or to be a preacher? What if he had stayed as pastor of a local church in North Carolina instead of following God's prompting to preach the Word with the organization Youth For Christ and then ultimately begin the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in order to spread the gospel around the world? How many hundreds and thousands of people might not be saved today?

Application: Sometimes we can become so content—and even complacent—in doing one thing for God that we miss out when He wants to redirect us to something else. Even though Philip was busy doing important things for God, he remained open to what new thing God might have in store for him.

2. Opportunity opens doors to mission moments (Acts 8:30–35).

Description: Because he knew that God had opened this door of opportunity, Philip confidently moved forward to make the most of his time with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Illustration: How can you turn a random opportunity into a mission moment? Marathon runner and recovering drug addict Ann Kiemel Anderson has written about numerous opportunities that God has given her through the years to change her world by speaking to one person at a time. Maybe it was at the grocery store. Maybe it was on an airplane. Maybe it was while running a marathon. Her catch phrase has been "You watch . . . you wait . . . You'll see."

Application: Sharing the love of God is not limited to mission trips and church buildings. Philip's response to the Spirit's nudging reminds us to look for opportunities to share Christ in everything that we

are doing wherever we are doing it.

3. **Mission moments set the stage for disciple-making (Acts 8:36–40).**

Description: Philip wasn't limited by circumstances. When the eunuch asked for baptism, Philip didn't say, "Well, this isn't typically where we Christians baptize people." Instead, he jumped on the opportunity to show the eunuch that God would honor his desire to identify with the Christian church and to become a disciple.

Illustration: What if Levi Strauss hadn't jumped on the opportunity to make jeans? or if Thomas Edison hadn't invented the light bulb? or if Alexander Graham Bell hadn't been curious enough to come up with the telegraph, a precursor to today's telephones? And we can thank George Eastman for cameras and Elisha Otis for elevators. Each of these inventors—and many more—didn't settle for what is typical. They stretched themselves and the people around them in an attempt to do more. They seized the opportunity and the knowledge that they had in order to go the next step and revolutionize the world with their products and inventions. We never know what big things might occur from out of what God wants to do through our lives.

Application: Like the inventors, the eunuch asked questions, taking his interest beyond mere curiosity to an understanding that he wanted to commit his life to following Christ. Don't let a long-time familiarity with the Bible keep you from asking questions and from looking for ways to identify with God's people. It may not be the way that it's always done, but if the goal is to make God's name known, then He will honor the effort!

Conclusion: What will it take for us to be ready?

Description: Philip was living his life in obedience to God's Word when he was called into a new opportunity to be used to grow the Kingdom of God. Because he was ready, he jumped right in!

Application: We shouldn't miss out on the plans that God has for us. We should be about the business of growing as believers and then be on the lookout for what God might have in store for us next. It could be anytime, anywhere!

REVERB::LIVING LOUD::lesson five

PHILIP: ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

biblical passage: Acts 8:26–40

memory verse: Acts 8:30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

1. _____ puts us in the place of _____ (Acts 8:26–29).
2. _____ opens doors to _____ (Acts 8:30–35).
3. _____ set the stage for _____ -making (Acts 8:36–40).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Whose job is it to share the Good News with those who don't know about Jesus?
- How do those people qualify for such an important responsibility?
- How does the Holy Spirit get your attention to let you know when and with whom you should share the Good News?
- Who shares the Good News when you don't?