

TAKEAWAY:

God is already at work in the hearts of people around you.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- Philip started the conversation with the Ethiopian from where the man already was in Isaiah rather than imposing a predetermined script – **what would it look like for you to enter spiritual conversations by listening first and meeting people in their existing questions?**

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Acts 8:26-40

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Philip began the conversation where the Ethiopian official already was, starting with the Scripture the man was already reading. Who in your life is already asking questions or seeking something? How might you enter their story rather than redirect it?
- How does the fact that God is always at work (John 5:17), and is the one who saves souls (Eph.2:8-9), release us of the burden of the salvation of others and set us on mission to simply share the Good News?
- The Ethiopian official's response to faith was immediate joy. What does that kind of joy tell us about what happens when someone truly encounters the gospel?
- Philip had to be interruptible – willing to leave what he was doing and follow an unexpected prompt. What makes it hard to be interruptible in your current season of life?

APPLICATION:

- Philip's assignment made no obvious strategic sense – a desert road, a single chariot, no crowd. When has God asked you to do something that seemed inefficient or strange? How did you respond?
- Practice being interruptible. When an unexpected opportunity to help, encourage, or connect with someone arises this week, choose to engage rather than move on.

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

God's Living and Active Word (Heb 4:12): God spoke! Isaiah wrote! The Ethiopian read, and Phillip was the guide that was part of God's written word coming back to life so that it could be heard anew and become a transformational element in this influential leader's life (i.e., the Ethiopian's)!

- Where do you find yourself most often in the above progression? Are you in a season of reading and seeking? Being called to step into the role of the guide for someone else?
- Who have been the most influential guides in your spiritual journey? What qualities made them so?
- What are some common barriers that keep people reading the Bible without ever experiencing its life-changing power? What does it take (here and now) for ancient Scripture to jump off the page and become a living, breathing reality in a person's day-to-day life?
- Share a specific "lightbulb moment" in your life that also invoked action. How can modern believers cultivate a faith where studying the Word naturally and quickly leads to obedient action, rather than just the accumulation of knowledge?

A Theology of the Desert: The specific angelic instruction to go to the road "which is desert" (Acts 8:26) carries immense biblical symbolism. Throughout scriptural history, from Moses to Elijah to Jesus, deserts are places of isolation, testing, and profound divine revelation. The eunuch was in a geographical desert, but also a spiritual one—seeking truth but lacking comprehension. That the expansive grace of the New Covenant is first extended to a marginalized African official in an unpopulated wasteland, rather than in the bustling, highly structured temple courts of Jerusalem, underscores the decentralized nature of the Church. God's economy of salvation repeatedly bypasses centers of human power to orchestrate intimate encounters in the wasteland.

- Throughout biblical history, the desert is a place of transformative divine encounter. How does isolation strip away human reliance and prepare the heart for God?
- The eunuch was in a geographical and spiritual desert. How can believers identify the subtle "desert seasons" in the lives of those around them who appear outwardly successful?
- When traversing personal "desert roads"—seasons of grief, loneliness, or confusion—how can this narrative provide assurance that God orchestrates encounters in the wasteland?
- This week's sermon emphasizes that God orchestrated *every detail*. How does recognizing the desert as a place of divine orchestration alter one's perspective on the inconveniences of life?
- The designation of the road as "desert" highlights the paradox of the encounter. God sends his messenger away from the fertile grounds of populated cities into a barren wasteland to find a single soul. The theological inference is that God's economy of salvation does not follow human logic regarding demographics or urban centers; grace frequently flows to the literal and metaphorical wastelands where the marginalized travel. (*Insight taken from The Venerable Bede's Commentary on Acts*)

QUOTES:

- **Eugene Peterson** "Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name."
- **Lesslie Newbigin** "The only [best?] hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it."
- **Martin Luther** "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."
- **D.L. Moody** "The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation."

GROUP PRAYER: Allow time for personal prayer with the following prompts:

- Ask God to help you be interruptible.

- Ask God for opportunities to share the name of Jesus.
- Ask God to quiet your soul and the things around you so you can listen to Him.