

The Word Spreads



Due to great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, the apostles spread their ministries throughout Judea and Samaria. As Saul intensifies his efforts to arrest those involved in the new church, Peter and John try to set straight a self-seeking sorcerer, and Philip encounters a confused, but curious, foreign eunuch.



(Needed: A supply of Nerf balls, foam rubber, or sponges)

Form teams. See which team can fit the most Nerf balls, sponges, or pieces of foam rubber into a shoe. Shoes should be turned upside down. Anything that falls out doesn't count. After you declare a winner (or a tie), take the stuff out of the shoe and watch it expand. This is sort of like what happens with the church—sometimes people try to squash it, but it always bounces back. In fact, persecution usually results in growth. This is what is going on in Acts 8.

DATE I USED THIS SESSION _____ GROUP I USED IT WITH _____

NOTES FOR NEXT TIME _____



1. Can you think of something bad that's happened to you that turned into something good?

2. After Jesus returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, the early church grew real fast. But its success and growth had been very threatening to the established religious leaders. They had just stoned Stephen. Now what was their plan (vss. 1-3)? (To organize a full-scale persecution of the church.)

3. Why didn't this plan succeed (vs. 4)? (Instead of focusing all their attention in Jerusalem, the disciples scattered. Of course, they took the message of the Gospel with them wherever they went. It was like trying to stamp out a fire, with the burning embers starting new fires wherever they landed.)

4. When you face difficult times, are you more likely to give up or try harder? Give an example or two.

5. What can we learn about Philip (vss. 5-7)? (Philip was a strong spiritual leader. He used the power of God to cast out evil spirits, heal people, and teach.)

6. The power of God that Philip displayed caught the attention of Simon the Sorcerer. What did Simon learn from Philip (vss. 9-13)? (The power of God had purpose—to heal, to bring comfort, and so forth. Simon had used sorcery as a means to set himself up as someone important. He had people thinking he was divine. But when given a choice, the people quickly believed in Philip's God rather than Simon. And though it says that "Simon himself believed," there will soon be a question as to the extent of his belief.)

7. Philip's work in Samaria had broken new ground. (The Jews and Samaritans had long been enemies of each other.) When news of the Samaritans' acceptance of the Gospel reached the church in Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John to follow up. What did Simon the sorcerer learn from Peter and John (vss. 14-25)? (God's power is not for sale! Anyone who tries to profit selfishly from what God provides can only expect trouble.)

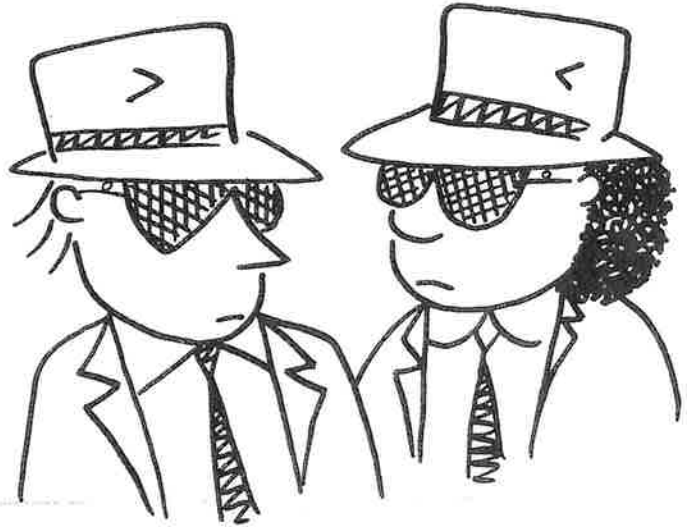
8. Read verses 26-40. **What kind of guy was Philip?** (Courageous; open to God's leading; familiar with Scripture; willing to share his faith, etc.) **If you could ask Philip one question, what would it be?** (Some might want to know how the Spirit spoke to him. Others might be curious about his mysterious disappearance in verse 39.)

9. **What do you suppose the Ethiopian eunuch told people about his experience in the desert?** (Certainly he would have told people about the new life he found in Christ. He might also have mentioned Philip's mysterious disappearance. Note: Philip reappeared about nineteen miles away. He then found his way to Caesarea, where he was twenty years later [Acts 21:8].)



Keep talking about Philip's willingness to follow God's Spirit into an unknown situation. Use the reproducible sheet, "On a Mission from God," to get your group thinking about how likely they would be to follow through on various missions. Continue your discussion with questions like these: **If you told God you were willing to serve Him anywhere, where would you most want to go? Where would you least want to go? How do you think you'd know what God wants you to do? How willing are you to go wherever He wants you to go?**

ON A MISSION FROM GOD



Philip was given a mission—to “go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (Acts 8:26). He followed through, and the rest is history. How likely would you be to follow through on each of these missions?

1. Take two years after high school or college to work as a short-term missionary in central Africa.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
2. Take two years after high school or college to work as a short-term missionary in Europe.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
3. Help serve meals in a homeless shelter one night a week.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
4. Help serve meals in a homeless shelter one night a month.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
5. Talk to a total stranger about your relationship with Jesus.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
6. Talk to a close friend or family member about your relationship with Jesus.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
7. Talk to someone who's very curious about having a relationship with Jesus.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
8. Spend a summer volunteering to paint houses in your hometown.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
9. Spend a summer teaching Bible school at a Native American Indian reservation.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!
10. Spend a summer on a beach evangelism trip to Hawaii.
 Piece of cake! I'd think about it. No way, José!