

Aug 13, 2017



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Called To Break Down Barriers Acts 8:26-39

Aim and Application of the Lesson

The lesson explains how God breaks down barriers to the gospel and that we are **Called to Break Down Barriers**. The study's aim is to learn that God will eliminate barriers and cause them to disappear when He is reaching out to a person. The study's application is to understand that we must be alert to the opportunities to teach about God and Jesus regardless of perceived barriers.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Lesson Introduction and Background

Among the seven men called to serve the early church in Acts 6 were Stephen and Philip (vs. 5). Stephen proved to be a powerful witness for the risen Christ. In fact, he became such a threat to the Jewish religious establishment that he was murdered by a mob of his enemies (6:9-7:60). After Stephen's death, Philip came to the forefront as an evangelist. He carried on an effective ministry in Samaria, where many came to faith in Christ (Acts 8:5-13). His ministry was not limited to the crowds in Samaria, however. Indeed, from there, the Lord directed Philip to one individual traveling along a road in a desert area south and west of Jerusalem. The man was an important Ethiopian official who was reading Isaiah 53 from a scroll as he traveled home from Jerusalem. When he invited Philip to explain to him the meaning of the text he was reading, Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The fact that he began at this Scripture shows that Philip not only explained that the words of Isaiah spoke of the Messiah but also that he went beyond the Isaiah passage to present the Lord Jesus, "whose suffering and death had accomplished exactly what Isaiah had predicted" (Kent, Jerusalem to Rome, Baker). It is also clear from what transpired in the following verses that "Philip's explanations must have been sufficiently broad to include the necessity of a personal response and the need for Christian baptism." This unique opportunity was divinely arranged, for the angel of the Lord had directed Philip to this very spot (Acts 8:26). God's purpose was accomplished when the Ethiopian man professed faith in Christ and was baptized (vss. 36-38). While much of Acts deals with the preaching of the gospel in cities and synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world, this interesting episode, in an obscure area and witnessed by very few people, has great importance in the biblical account and several lessons for us today. First, we should note that this Philip was not the Philip who was one of Jesus' twelve disciples (cf. Acts 1:13). Rather, he was a wise, faithful, and godly man who simply was willing to serve the church as he served the Lord (6:3-5). God uses those who show themselves faithful, not just those whom people consider leaders of the church. Philip was available and willing, and God turned him into a powerful witness for Christ. He was later called "the evangelist" (21:8). Second, this incident reminds us that the Old Testament clearly speaks of Jesus. We cannot get a full portrait of the Lord apart from the Hebrew Scriptures. Third, Philip began where the Ethiopian was in his understanding or lack of it. We too should seek to meet people where they are and patiently and lovingly lead them to Jesus, not try to force the gospel on them before they understand it. Finally, while it is the Word of God that reveals the truth to sinners, God uses people like us to explain it to them and persuade them to believe it. It is crucial that we know the Bible and are willing and able to present the gospel clearly to others.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

The gospel changes people and relationships

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Dear God, thank You that the gospel of Jesus Christ changes lives and relationships. Thank You for removing the barriers between us and making us all members of Your family.

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

No longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

(Philemon 1:16 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Sept 17, 2017)

Series: God's Urgent Call

UNIT: Calls in the New Testament

NEXT WEEK

Called to Proclaim Christ

(Acts 9:10-20)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Philip's Call (Acts 8:26-29)

Call using a discerning spirit to hear God's call (26)

By knowing God's voice (John 10:1-6)

By being a wise listener (Prov 1:5)

By being a humble servant who listens (1 Sam 3:10)

By being quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19)

By God empowering our ears to listen (Isa 50:4)

By being guided by God (Prov 1:3-5)

Respond to call by obedience (27-28)

By not only hearing but being obedient (Luke 11:28)

Obedience through love (John 14:15)

Obedience is an obligation (Rom 8:12-14)

Obedience regardless of circumstances (Dan 3:16-18)

Obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8)

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

Obedience that shows love for God (1 John 5:2-3)

Obedient because of being chosen by God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2)

Rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance (29)

Relying on the Holy Spirit through having the Mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:12-16)

Guidance that is part of God's plan for our life (Jer 29:11)

Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)

Guidance that is not under the law (Gal 5:18)

Guidance that represents we are a child of God (Rom 8:14)

The Ethiopian's Need to Understand (Acts 8:30-34)

Be sensitive to other's understanding (30-31)

Sensitive to keep from causing others to stumble (1 Cor 8:9)

Sensitive because if God accepts others, we should also (Rom 14:1-3)

Sensitive because knowledge makes one proud (1 Cor 8:1-2)

Sensitive to not show favoritism (James 2:1-4)

Sensitive not to view others from a worldly point of view (2 Cor 5:16)

Be prepared to explain Scripture through the aid of the Holy Spirit (32-34)

By always being prepared to provide the reason for the hope of faith (1 Peter 3:15)

By witnessing about Jesus and Jesus only (1 Cor 2:1-3)

By relying on the testimony of God (1 John 5:9-12)

By rightly dividing the Word of God (2 Tim 2:15)

By correctly interpreting and applying God's word by proclaiming the whole will of God (Acts 20:27)

By correctly interpreting and applying God's word by not distorting God's word or using deception (2 Cor 4:2-5)

By correctly interpreting and applying God's word by having it revealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:4-5)

By correctly interpreting and applying God's word by having it spiritually discerned by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13-16)

The Ethiopian's Conversion (Acts 8:35-39)

Through Witnessing about Jesus (35)

Witness to others because Jesus commanded it (Matt 28:18-20)

Witness to others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

Witness to others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

Witness that starts at home (Luke 8:39)

Witness about what God has done for us (Ps 66:16)

Explaining that Jesus is the only way to salvation (36-39)

Jesus is the only way because no one comes to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6)

Jesus is the only way because salvation is found in no one else (Acts 4:12)

Jesus is the only way because He is the only access to God (Eph 2:18)

Jesus is the only way because He opened the way through the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 10:19-21)

Jesus is the only way because He justified us and provided peace with God for us (Rom 5:1-2)