**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# Philip and the Ethiopian

### MEETING AIM

To explore how God uses us to tell others about the good news of Jesus.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 8:26-40

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

In this story in Acts we come across one of the early instances of evangelism. Philip is able to explain who Jesus is to the Ethiopian man on his journey, who responds by wanting an immediate baptism! This story is an obvious chance to explore what the group already knows about Jesus, and how they might explain him to someone who wanted to understand him, but also to raise some of the questions that they have.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and ask the children to share about the week they have had. Ask them: “What’s the most unusual journey that you’ve ever been on?” Allow them to spend time thinking and sharing.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** masking tape; mat or sheet; blindfolds

Before the session, map out a path on the floor with masking tape, but cover it up with a mat or sheet before the activity.

Ask the children to get into small groups, and in that group nominate someone to walk the path blindfolded. The rest of the group’s job is to give directions to that person to help them complete the marked-out route. Each group’s objective is to get their person from the start to the finish in the quickest time. Time each group – the quickest group is the winner!

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** map of Judea (use a Bible map or an atlas); play figures (such as Lego or Playmobil) or playdough

Show the children the maps you have brought and the route between Jerusalem and Gaza. Retell the story, using your play figures on the map to act it out. It will only add to the fun if the figurines are all a bit bizarre! Alternatively, you could make figurines out of playdough. Include details such as the Ethiopian reading the passage out loud (it says that Philip overheard him reading, v30). Even have a bowl of water ready to re-enact the baptism.

If the children would like to, let them retell the story themselves.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* What did Philip need to be ready to do his job in the story?
* How do you think that encounter between the two men changed the Ethiopian’s life?
* Do you have things about Jesus that you don’t understand? Who are the people that you can ask to help you explain them?
* Who are the people in your life that don’t know about Jesus? How would you feel if they asked you to explain who Jesus was to them?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** large sheets of paper; pens

In the story, the Ethiopian man had the opportunity to ask questions about Jesus, and Philip was able to answer them.

Split into smaller groups of about three or four people. Give each one a large piece of paper and ask them to discuss and note down the main points they’d make if they were asked to explain who Jesus is. Give the groups ten minutes to talk and write down their points, and then ask the groups to nominate a spokesperson who can feedback to the wider group.

After the spokespeople have fed back on behalf of their groups, ask the groups to turn the page over and write down the questions that they might still have about Jesus. Again ask a spokesperson from each group to feedback their questions and let the whole group discuss what they think or if they have similar questions.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Ask the group to find somewhere comfortable on their own. Explain that you’re going to retell the story and that they can try to imagine themselves in it. Ask them to close their eyes and try to picture the scene as you explain it to them:

You are on a long journey; it’s been going a while and it’s going to last for weeks. It’s hot and dusty and you’re far from home.

While you’ve been in Jerusalem, you’ve heard some things about a man called Jesus, and there’s a lot of discussion about it. Some people have changed their lives to follow him; they say that he’s the Son of God. Other people are angry and say that he and his followers are liars, and that he was killed and that should be the end of that!

You’re not sure what to make of it, so you spend some time reading on the way home, hoping that you’ll understand better. In the deepest part of your heart, you wish the stories that you’ve heard about Jesus to be true, but at the same time you’re nervous because that might mean your whole life gets messed up and changed around! Plus, you don’t want to be seen as a liar or a fool if you do believe.

You read the passage. It says:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,

and like a lamb silent before its shearer,

so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.” (vv32-33, NRSVA)

Could Jesus really be alive? Could he be the Son of God? Could he even be interested in you, on this journey far from home, and want you to know about him?

Now imagine yourself today on a journey you do often. What would change for you if Jesus joined you on that journey? What would you want to ask him? Pause to let the group think about this. What might he explain to you? Pause to let the group think about this.

Finish this time of meditation and imagining with a prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you join us on our journeys. Please meet with us in what we know and what we don’t know about you. Help us to see you more and to understand you better. Help us to be people that can explain who you are to people who do not know you. Amen.

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