Preschool–Grade 6

Philip and the Ethiopian

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: The scripture points to Jesus. Believe on Him with all your heart and obey the gospel without waiting, and tell others the way Philip did.
Bible passage: Acts 8:26–40. Students read Acts 8:26–35 and 8:36–40 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." *Acts 8:35 (KJV)* and "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." *Acts 8:37 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Acts 8:1–40 and Isaiah 53. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: What's Stopping You? (5–10 minutes)

Write on the board: *What stops people from doing something they know is right?* Students call out answers (fear, what others think, "I'll do it later," not understanding, being busy). Write them all. Then ask: *Which of these is the hardest for you?* Say: "Today we'll meet a man who asked, 'What doth hinder me?' What stops me? And his answer was: nothing."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Acts 8:26–35. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **which is desert** (8:26): a dry, empty road; **Gaza**: a city near the sea, southwest of Jerusalem
- **an eunuch of great authority** (8:27): a trusted officer of the queen's court with great power; **had the charge of all her treasure**: was in charge of all her money
- **Esaias** (8:28): the Greek form of the name Isaiah; **join thyself** (8:29): go right up next to
- **Understandest thou what thou readest?** (8:30): do you understand what you are reading?
- **except some man should guide me** (8:31): unless someone explains it to me
- **dumb before his shearer** (8:32): silent while its wool is cut; **in his humiliation** (8:33): when He was brought low
- **his judgment was taken away** (8:33): He was not given a fair trial; **his life is taken from the earth**: He was put to death
- **Of whom speaketh the prophet this?** (8:34): who is the prophet talking about?

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Talk it through: the man was reading what we call Isaiah 53:7–8. A few verses earlier, Isaiah wrote, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5, KJV). Philip "began at the same scripture" (Acts 8:35): he started where the man already was, and showed him Jesus. Jesus did the same with two of His followers after He rose: "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, KJV).

Read out loud: Acts 8:36–40. Old words in this passage:

- **what doth hinder me** (8:36): what stops me?; **thou mayest** (8:37): you may
- **the Son of God** (8:37): Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16)
- **commanded the chariot to stand still** (8:38): gave the order for the chariot to stop
- **caught away** (8:39): took away suddenly; **rejoicing**: full of joy
- **Azotus**, **Caesarea** (8:40): towns near the sea; Philip preached in every city between them

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Philip left a city where crowds were listening (8:5–8) to go to a desert road for one man (8:26–27). What does that tell you about how God sees one person?
2. The man was reading the Bible and still needed help to understand (8:30–31). Why is it good to ask questions about the Bible? Who could you ask?
3. Philip "began at the same scripture" (8:35). How can you start where a friend already is when you talk about Jesus?
4. The man asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" (8:36). What reasons do people give for waiting? Why didn't he wait?
5. Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart" (8:37). What is the difference between believing a little and believing with all your heart?
6. In the same chapter, the Samaritans were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and then received the Holy Ghost (8:16–17). How does Acts 8 fit with what Peter preached in Acts 2:38?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: in Acts 8:35, **scripture** means God's Word written down, **at the same scripture** means right where the man was reading, and **preached unto him** means told him about. In Acts 8:37, **thou mayest** means you may, and **Son of God** means Jesus is God who came in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Acts 8:35 this week; keep working on Acts 8:37 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The man from Ethiopia heard Jesus preached from the scripture, believed with all his heart, and was baptized without waiting. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water, just as Philip and the man 'went down both into the water' and came 'up out of the water' (Acts 8:38–39). In Samaria they were 'baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 8:16). **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What part of the Bible is hard for me to understand? Who could I ask to guide me?
2. Is anything hindering me from obeying God right now? What is it?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you believe with all your heart, and for a chance to tell someone about Jesus this week.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Isaiah 53 and look for Jesus in it. Tell one person something you learned about Him.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that all the scripture points to Jesus. Help us believe on Him with all our hearts, obey You without waiting, and tell others about Jesus wherever You send us. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about being baptized: be glad and encouraging, and point them to their parents and pastor. Never pressure a student.

If a student asks what "eunuch" means (8:27): it was a word for a trusted officer who served in a king's or queen's court. This man had great authority and was in charge of all the queen's treasure. Keep the focus on the story.

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