COATS BAPTIST CHURCH

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE
FROM AUGUST 29, 2021

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED? // ACTS 8: 26-40

The book of Acts is unique in the New Testament as an example of the historical genre. Luke's intention in this book is to record the history of the early church. In this particular passage, we see the outworking of Jesus' command to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Mark 16: 15), as God has arranged a divine encounter between an Ethiopian eunuch and Philip the evangelist. Through meeting Philip, the Ethiopian court official, a man who had heard of the one true God and had traveled to Jerusalem to worship him, would have the opportunity to meet Christ and come to know him in saving faith. The encounter results in the man's baptism, but the emphasis of the text is on his salvation through Christ.

1. The preparation for the gospel (v. 26-29)

Before this divine encounter the Holy Spirit was actively at work in:
a. Preparing the location for the encounter--the road between Jerusalem and Gaza;
b. Preparing the eunuch's heart--while not yet a follower of Christ, the Ethiopian was seeking the truth about God;
c. Preparing to send Philip—despite the unusual nature of the prompting, Philip instantly obeyed;
d. Preparing the right scripture at the right moment—the eunuch is reading from Isaiah 53:7 and 8, a text with a messianic message that Philip could easily use to point to Christ.

2. The explanation of the gospel (v. 30-35)

The Lord again tests Philip's obedience by prompting him to go and join the Ethiopian's chariot. He opens the conversation by asking, "Do you understand what you are reading?" We don't want people to merely understand Christian ideas or topics—we want them to understand their Bibles. The Lord knows what he is doing, and by putting Philip in the right place and the right time, he was able to reap a harvest. In explaining the meaning of the scripture, Philip "opened his mouth." Words are necessary for sharing the gospel, as "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17). The Ethiopian's questions about Isaiah gave Philip a place to begin sharing the gospel, but he didn't just stay there—he shared all the way to the cross. You cannot evangelize without sharing the good news of Christ's death and resurrection for the salvation of sinners.

3. The application of the gospel (v. 36-40)

Something happens to the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip doesn't tell him he needs to say a prayer to be saved; he doesn't need to raise his hand or walk an aisle. Through the message of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, the Ethiopian has been converted, and he has connected the dots between Jesus and baptism. He wants to take the first step of obedience as a follower of Christ.
The text doesn't say how much water is present, but the fact that they went "*down into* the water" and that the Greek word *baptizō* is used points to submersion. However, the mode or method is less important than the meaning of the baptism—it was a public profession of the inward change in his heart, a declaration of how Jesus had changed him.

Why be baptized?

1. To obey the command of Jesus (Matt 28: 18-20)
2. To imitate the example of Jesus (Luke 3:21)
3. To demonstrate the gospel of Jesus (Romans 6:4)
4. To show that you are a follower of Jesus (Acts 2:41)

Baptism is not the means of salvation—it is the outward symbol of an inward change, and it's all about him: Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to understand that baptism is not the means of salvation? If baptism doesn't save, what does it do?

2. What divine encounters have we experienced in our lives? How did God use these encounters?

3. Are we sensitive and obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Are we encouraged by the knowledge that he is preparing the way?