
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



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COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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SERMON RECAP

In Acts 8:26-40 we meet Philip, a young leader who leaves a wildly successful revival in Samaria because God sends him to a deserted road for one solitary, wounded man. Pastor Gary walked us through this story to show that Acts is not just a book about power; it is about the personhood of the Holy Spirit and the way He meets, broken people in very specific places. God leaves the ninety-nine to go after the one, and in this passage “the one” is an Ethiopian eunuch socially marginalized, physically mutilated, vocationally successful yet deeply empty. The Spirit orchestrates a “sovereign setup” where Philip overtakes his chariot, explains the Scriptures, and joins him in the waters of baptism.

Underneath the details, Pastor Gary’s pastoral heart was aimed at those who feel unseen, disfigured, or disqualified outwardly or inwardly. Through Isaiah 53, the eunuch discovers a Savior who was “marred,” “despised,” and “crushed” someone who truly gets him. Likewise, you are not overlooked in a sea of people; the Lord “sees you,” knows the deepest pain you carry, and wants access to all your heart. This message called us to let the Spirit shape our personhood our speech, desires, agendas by bringing our hidden wounds to Jesus, asking what in us needs to die with Him, and then rising to walk in newness of life. We are invited to become “overtakers” like Philip: people who leave comfort, pursue the one, explain the Word, and walk with others into healing and obedience.

STUDY GUIDE

Key Points

Personhood over mere power

Acts is not only a record of miracles; it is an invitation into friendship with the person of the Holy Spirit.

Power can happen “out there,” but personhood is transformed in here our character, desires, words, and responses.

God leaves the many for the one

Philip leaves multitudes in Samaria for one eunuch in the desert.

Jesus is always mindful of “the one” in the crowd and that includes you today.

Identity in Christ for the wounded and “different”

The eunuch carried deep physical, social, and emotional scars; he was visibly “other.”

In Isaiah 53 he discovers a Savior who is also marred, rejected, and acquainted with grief.

Your deepest pain can become the very place of deepest intimacy with Christ and ministry to others.

Worship first posture / “All your heart” faith

The eunuch travels 1,500 miles to worship; he’s seeking something more than status and success.

Philip insists baptism is for those who believe “with all your heart” not casual, halfhearted religion but a surrendered, worship first life.

Stillness and surrender in desolate places

God sends Philip from a noisy revival to a quiet, deserted road.

The eunuch meets Christ not in the temple but in a lonely stretch of wilderness.

Our “deserts” ICU waiting rooms, long term pain, unanswered questions can be sovereign setups where God says, “I see you.”

Overtaking others in love

The Spirit tells Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

Effective ministry often means pursuing those everyone else avoids sitting with the outcast, listening, explaining Scripture, and bearing burdens.

Key Scripture

Primary Text

Acts 8:26-40 Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Other Verses Mentioned or Quoted

Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...”

Matthew 19:11-12 Jesus on eunuchs, including those “made eunuchs by others.”

Isaiah 53:1-12 The Suffering Servant: marred, despised, crushed, bearing our griefs and sorrows.

Galatians 6:2 “Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Psalms 22 Prophetic description of Christ’s rejection and suffering.

Luke 15:4-7 (alluded to) The shepherd leaving the ninety-nine for the one.

Mark 5:30 / Luke 8:45-46 (alluded to) Jesus stopping in a crowd: “Who touched Me?”

John 4:1-42 (alluded to) Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 9:1-3 (alluded to) The man born blind that the works of God might be displayed.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (alluded to) Paul’s thorn in the flesh and God’s grace in weakness.

Romans 5:8 (paraphrased) God demonstrates His love by Christ’s death “while we were yet sinners.”

Luke 15:20 (alluded to) The father running to the returning prodigal.

John 1:48-49 (alluded to) “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Matthew 26:36-39 / Luke 22:39-44 (alluded to) Jesus’ anguish and sweat like drops of blood in Gethsemane.

1 Corinthians 11:28 “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

Matthew 22:37 Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

(SOME OF THESE WERE PARAPHRASED OR WOVEN INTO PASTOR GARY’S NARRATIVE RATHER THAN READ VERBATIM.)

Other Relevant Verses

Psalms 34:18 “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

THEMATIC TIE: Reinforces God’s nearness to those who feel marred, crushed, and overlooked just like the eunuch.

Ephesians 2:13-14 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...”

THEMATIC TIE: Expounds how Christ brings the outcast “near,” giving a new identity and peace.

Romans 6:3-4 “All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death... that we too might walk in newness of life.”

THEMATIC TIE: Explains the eunuch’s eagerness for baptism as a picture of dying to old wounds, resentment, and self rule, and rising to new life.

DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL (DAYS 1-5)

DAY 1 - "HE SEES YOU IN THE DESERT"

Reflection Question

Where in your life do you feel most unseen, forgotten, or "in the desert," and what would it mean to believe that God has sovereignly set that scene?

Reading

Acts 8:26-29

Psalm 34:18

Devotional Content

Philip is at the height of ministry success in Samaria miracles, conversions, "great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8). That's where we assume the Spirit would keep him. But the angel of the Lord sends him to "the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert." In the ancient world, such roads were dangerous, isolated, and largely ignored except by merchants and travelers passing through. It's the opposite of a platform or a crowd.

At the same time, an Ethiopian eunuch is traveling home. Historically, Ethiopia (more likely ancient Nubia or the region of the upper Nile) was seen as the "ends of the earth" to a Jew in Jerusalem. This man is powerful treasurer to the queen but deeply marked by involuntary mutilation and social stigma. He has just worshiped in Jerusalem, likely kept at a distance by purity laws, and now he's alone with a scroll in a chariot, in a dry place geographically and emotionally.

Into that desert, the Spirit speaks: "Rise and go..." and then, "Go over and join this chariot." The God who is praised in every nation on the Lord's Day is not distracted from this one wounded soul in the middle of nowhere. The desert is not a mistake; it is a setup. God has already prepared the eunuch's heart (he is reading Isaiah 53!), and He sends Philip at the precise moment of his confusion and hunger.

Application & Closing

Consider your own "desert": a lonely season, a chronic illness, an unresolved grief, an ICU waiting room like Pastor Gary described. What if the Lord has purposely placed you there because He sees you and intends to meet you in a way the "crowds" never could?

Name one "desert place" in your life before God.

Ask Him: “Lord, what are You seeing here that I am missing? Who might You be sending to me or sending me to right in this place?”

Be still for a few minutes. Let the Spirit bring a face, a Scripture, or a next step to mind.

Specific Challenge:

Today, set aside 10 quiet minutes with no phone or noise. Simply sit in God’s presence and repeatedly tell Him: “You see me here.” Let that truth travel from your mind to your emotions. If He brings tears, let them come. If He brings a name or a nudge, write it down.

DAY 2 - “THE SAVIOR WHO LOOKS LIKE YOU”

Reflection Question

What part of your story your body, your past, your scars make you feel least “acceptable,” and how might Jesus’ suffering speak into that place?

Reading

Isaiah 53:2-4

Matthew 19:11-12

Devotional Content

The eunuch’s physical description, as Pastor Gary outlined, would have been immediately recognizable. In the ancient Near East, eunuchs were often tall with disproportionately long limbs, lacked body and facial hair, had high pitched voices, and carried the visible marks of hormonal deprivation. In a culture where beards symbolized wisdom and manhood, and children were often seen as legacy, this man embodied “failure” in multiple social categories through no choice of his own.

Now imagine him reading Isaiah 53 in that chariot:

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.”

“He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

For the first time, the eunuch is encountering a figure who is not the perfect hero king of mythology but a Servant so marred that people look away, then look back in “paralyzed astonishment.” Jesus’ body is beaten beyond recognition. He is publicly shamed,

stripped, and mocked. He experiences not just physical agony but the emotional horror of forsakenness. This is the One the eunuch discovers knows him not abstractly, but experientially.

Matthew 19 reminds us that Jesus names eunuchs as a recognized and complex category of people some “born,” some “made” by others, some choosing celibacy for the kingdom. The Savior is not embarrassed by them; He speaks of them with sober understanding. The eunuch in Acts 8 is not an afterthought to heaven; he is in the storyline of redemption.

Application & Closing

You may not be a eunuch, but you probably carry something that makes you feel “other”: a diagnosis, your appearance, your past sins, a betrayal, abuse you suffered, infertility, singleness, or something you did in secret. Isaiah 53 announces: the God of the universe has entered that space, bearing sorrow and shame in a body that was disfigured and rejected.

Identify one area where you instinctively say, “If people really saw this, they would pull back from me.”

Read Isaiah 53:3 slowly and imagine Jesus looking at that part of your story, saying, “I am acquainted with this grief.”

Ask Him to move you from hiding to bringing that pain into His light.

Specific Challenge:

Write down (privately) one sentence describing a part of your story or identity that brings you shame. Then, beneath it, write Isaiah 53:4: “Surely He has borne my griefs and carried my sorrows.” Keep that paper somewhere you will see it this week, and when shame rises, read the verse aloud with your name in it.

DAY 3 - “ALL YOUR HEART IN THE WATER”

Reflection Question

Is there something in you right now that you know needs to die an attitude, resentment, or self-protection that you’ve been unwilling to surrender?

Reading

Acts 8:35-38

Romans 6:3-4

Devotional Content

Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.” The New Testament hasn’t been written yet, so Philip preaches Christ out of Isaiah, likely explaining Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, and the call to repent and be baptized. We know he talked about baptism, because as soon as they see water the eunuch blurts out, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”

This is not a man looking for a religious box to check. He has heard enough about baptism to understand that it symbolizes being united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6). Something in him wants to die perhaps resentment toward those who mutilated him, bitterness toward a system that used him, self-loathing over his appearance, or deep loneliness. The desert heat presses that desperation to the surface.

Philip doesn’t cheapen the moment. He doesn’t say, “Sure, why not, if you feel like it.” He says, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch responds with a clear confession: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then Philip goes down into the water with him. Not only is the eunuch identifying with Christ’s death and resurrection he is experiencing a brother willing to be drenched in his story, to share this death and life moment side by side.

Application & Closing

Baptism is more than a ceremony; it is a declaration: “My old self is crucified with Christ. I am not my wounds, not my past, not my bitterness. I belong to Him now.” Even if you’ve already been baptized, the question remains: What in you still needs to die? A private addiction, a cherished grievance, a subtle self-righteousness, cynicism, chronic self-pity?

Ask the Lord plainly: “What in me needs to die now?”

Listen. He may bring a relationship, habit, or inner posture to mind.

Picture that thing going under the water with Jesus and staying there.

Specific Challenge:

Choose one concrete act this week to “bury” a particular sin or resentment for example, confessing it to a trusted believer, writing a letter of forgiveness (even if you never send it), or finally asking to be baptized if you never have. Tell the Lord, “I don’t want this living in me another day without a fight.”

Reflection Question

Who in your life right now might feel like the eunuch isolated, misunderstood, or avoided and what would it look like for you to “overtake” their chariot?

Reading

Acts 8:29-31

Galatians 6:2

Devotional Content

The Spirit doesn't just send Philip to the right road; He gives a specific command: “Go over and join this chariot.” The Greek carries the idea of coming alongside, attaching yourself. Philip doesn't stroll; he runs to the chariot. He hears the eunuch reading Isaiah aloud (customary in the ancient world) and asks a humble, non-threatening question: “Do you understand what you are reading?”

The eunuch's answer is crucial: “How can I, unless someone guides me?” There is no pride, no posturing just honest need. He then invites Philip to sit with him. This is a moment of profound dignity; a high official, socially shamed yet vocationally powerful, asks a wandering preacher to climb into his personal space and explain the Word of God. Philip, in turn, does not stand at a distance and shout doctrine; he shares proximity, listening, and conversation.

Galatians 6:2 calls us to “carry one another's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ.” Often, the people God wants us to help are precisely those we naturally avoid: the socially awkward, the chronically ill, the traumatized, the visibly “different,” or even those whose sin patterns irritate us. Philip models a Spirit led life that moves toward these people, not away from them.

Application & Closing

Ask yourself: Am I more like Philip or more like the crowd that would have instinctively pulled back from a eunuch? To “overtake” someone's chariot may mean:

Sitting with that person others avoid after church.

Inviting a lonely neighbor or coworker to coffee.

Asking gentle questions and listening instead of fixing.

Offering to read and discuss Scripture with someone who is confused.

Specific Challenge:

This week, intentionally move toward one person you might normally overlook or avoid. Pray before you see them: “Holy Spirit, help me overtake this person’s ‘chariot’ today.” Then act: start a conversation, offer a listening ear, or extend an invitation. Don’t preach at them; be present and see what doors God opens.

DAY 5 - “WORSHIP IN THE WILDERNESS”

Reflection Question

Is your spiritual posture more “worship first” or “results first”? How do you respond when God moves you from visible fruitfulness into hidden, quiet obedience?

Reading

Acts 8:4-8, 26-27, 39-40

Ephesians 2:13-14

Devotional Content

The contrast in Acts 8 is striking. In Samaria, Philip preaches to “multitudes,” sees signs and wonders, and brings “great joy” to a city historically despised by Jews. By any metric, this is a dream ministry assignment. Yet mid revival the Lord redirects him to a road marked simply: “This is desert.” No worship band, no crowd, no platform just heat, dust, and one foreign dignitary in a chariot.

What we see, though, is that God is not downsizing Philip; He is deepening him. The same Spirit who empowered public signs in Samaria now entrusts him with a private, history shaping encounter: the gospel carried toward the “ends of the earth” through this Ethiopian. After the baptism, the Spirit catches Philip away, and the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing. Philip ends up in Azotus and continues preaching in all the towns. He is content to be moved around like a servant, not an owner, because his real “win” is obedience and the joy of seeing Jesus made known.

Ephesians 2 reminds us that in Christ, those who were “far off” have been brought near. The eunuch traveled 1,500 miles for temple worship yet likely still stood at a distance. In the wilderness, the Lord draws near to him, brings him into Christ, and sends him home rejoicing. Worship is no longer anchored to a building but to a Person who meets him on a deserted road.

Application & Closing

Where has God moved you from a visible, “successful” place to a quiet, unseen one? Parenting small kids, caring for aging parents, enduring sickness, serving in behind-the-scenes roles these can feel like demotions if our hearts are results first. But in the kingdom, the desert is often where God reveals how close He really is.

Identify one area where you feel “hidden” or underused.

Offer it to God as worship: “This road is Yours. Use me here.”

Ask Him to give you joy not just in outcomes, but in His presence with you and in simple obedience.

Specific Challenge:

Choose one hidden or thankless task you regularly do (at home, work, or church). This week, consciously perform it as worship talk to God while you do it, thank Him for seeing you there, and ask Him to bless “the one” it serves. Write down any shift you notice in your attitude or sense of His presence.

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

OPENING

Welcome everyone warmly. Remind the group that we are gathering not just to study a passage, but to meet with the living God together.

Invite someone to open in prayer, using prompts such as:

Thank God for seeing us, especially in our “desert places.”

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation.

Pray for open hearts, honesty, and encouragement.

(AVOID SCRIPTED PRAYERS; ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO PRAY IN THEIR OWN WORDS.)

THEMATIC RECAP

Pastor Gary showed how Acts 8:26-40 reveals a God who leaves the crowds for one wounded person, and a Spirit who cares not only about power but about transforming our personhood. The Ethiopian eunuch, a mutilated and marginalized official, meets a Savior who is marred, crushed, and acquainted with grief and walks away rejoicing with a new identity in Christ.

Core Highlights:

God orchestrates “sovereign setups” in deserts and lonely places.

The Holy Spirit is a Person who reshapes our desires, speech, and responses.

The gospel offers deep identification and healing for the wounded and “different.”

True discipleship is “all your heart,” not casual religion.

We are called to “overtake” others in love, especially the outcast and overlooked.

ICEBREAKER (5-15 MINUTES)

Question:

Without oversharing, can you describe a time when you felt “seen” by God in a surprising way maybe through another person, a Scripture, or a circumstance?

Give each person a chance to share briefly if they're comfortable. Keep the tone gentle and honoring.

SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION

PASSAGE 1: ACTS 8:26-31

Discussion Prompts:

What strikes you most about God's timing and instructions to Philip in vv. 26-29?

How would you feel if God moved you from a "successful" place to a seemingly empty one? What might be hard about that? What might be freeing?

The eunuch traveled about 1,500 miles to worship. What does that say about his spiritual hunger?

"How can I [understand], unless someone guides me?" What does this teach us about humility in learning Scripture?

Where do you see the personhood of the Spirit in this passage (not just His power)?

Who in your life might be quietly "reading Isaiah" and waiting for someone to come alongside and help them understand?

PASSAGE 2: ISAIAH 53:3-6

Discussion Prompts:

Read these verses slowly. Which phrase resonates with your own story of pain or shame, and why?

How does knowing that Jesus was "despised and rejected" and "acquainted with grief" change the way you see your own wounds?

In what ways do people today still "hide their faces" from those who are disfigured, marginalized, or different?

Verse 4 says He has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." What would it look like, practically, to let Jesus carry something you've been hauling for years?

How might embracing this picture of Jesus transform how we approach those who suffer around us?

PASSAGE 3: ROMANS 6:3-4

Discussion Prompts:

How does Paul describe the meaning of baptism here?

Thinking about the eunuch's eagerness "What prevents me from being baptized?" what do you imagine he wanted to "bury" with Christ?

What parts of your old life tend to "climb back out of the water" and trouble you? How do you usually respond?

How is "walking in newness of life" different from just trying harder to be good?

GRAND SYNTHESIS PROMPT

Putting these passages together, how do you see:

God's heart for the one who feels far off?

The role of the Spirit in guiding both Philip and the eunuch?

The connection between Jesus' suffering, our wounds, and our new life in Him?

How might this integrated vision reshape the way our group relates to (a) God, (b) ourselves, and (c) the "eunuchs" around us those who bear deep, sometimes visible scars?

APPLICATION: GROWING PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL PRAYER

Invite the group to brainstorm practical steps, then consider committing to some together.

Personal Prayer Steps:

Set aside a short daily "desert time" (5-10 minutes) of silence before God, simply acknowledging, "You see me."

Make a list of areas where you need something to "die" pray through one item each day this week, surrendering it to Christ.

Ask the Holy Spirit each morning: "Who's chariot do You want me to overtake today?"

Communal Prayer Steps:

Begin group meetings with a few minutes of silent stillness before anyone speaks.

Once a month, dedicate most of the small group time to praying for:

Those who feel unseen in our church/community.

Our mission partners (like those supported by CBC's Passion Fund).

Specific individuals who are "far off" spiritually.

Pair up for the week to check in and pray for each other's "desert places" by phone or text.

Encourage the group to choose one or two of these to practice consistently over the next month.

CLOSING

Prayer Needs:

Invite members to share:

Where they feel "in the desert."

Any areas where they sense something needs to "die" in them.

People they sense God calling them to "overtake" in love.

Write down requests (with permission) so the group can follow up.

Closing Prayer Prompts (for a group member to pray through in their own words):

Thank God for seeing and loving each person in the group personally.

Ask the Spirit to deepen our awareness of His personhood, not just His power.

Pray that we would be willing, like Philip, to leave the crowds for the one.

Ask for courage to bring our scars and shame into the light of Isaiah 53.

Pray for our church to be a "come alongside" people, especially for the outcast and wounded.

LEADER NOTES

Create safety. Model vulnerability: share appropriately from your own story of feeling unseen or ashamed. This gives permission for others to be honest.

Guard against fixing. When someone shares pain, resist the urge to offer quick solutions. Instead, listen, thank them for trusting the group, and gently point them to Jesus' identification with their suffering.

Watch the time. Don't rush Scripture exploration but also leave adequate space for prayer and personal sharing. It's okay not to "finish all the questions."

Include the quieter voices. After a few people share, you might ask, "Is there anyone who hasn't shared yet who would like to?" without putting people on the spot.

Manage emotional depth. The topics (shame, trauma, bodily pain) can surface deep emotions. Affirm that big feelings are welcome and remind the group that long term healing may also involve counseling or pastoral care.

Honor confidentiality. Remind the group that what is shared in the group stays in the group, unless someone is in danger (in which case you involve pastoral leadership).

PRAYER PROTOCOL

As a leader, you can guide prayer without scripting words:

Offer themes to pray through (e.g., "Let's each thank God silently for one way He has seen us this week," or "Ask the Lord to show you one thing in you that needs to die with Christ.").

Invite different members to pray if they feel comfortable and assure others that silent agreement is also participation.

Consider using short, one sentence prayers so multiple people can participate without pressure.

End by thanking God for His presence and asking the Spirit to continue His work long after the meeting ends.

Encourage Spirit led, heart level conversation with God rather than polished speeches.