

GOD'S STORY - MY STORY

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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SERMON SERIES: Signs of Life

The resurrection of Jesus marks the beginning of a new chapter in human history. It opened the way to new life for followers of the Christ. The proof of the resurrection is manifest in the signs of life evident in the living community of faith who gather in Jesus' name. During this series, we will explore the most important of these signs.

TODAY'S SERMON: *A New Relationship*

The resurrection of Jesus establishes a new relationship with God and others through the work of the Holy Spirit.

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THE SERMON TEXT: Acts 8:26-40

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

GOD' STORY

1. According to Acts 8:26, an angel of the Lord gave St. Philip a command to go somewhere. Where was St. Philip when he received the command and where did he go?
2. On the wilderness road, St. Philip meets someone. Who does he meet and what do we know about this person, according to the scripture?
3. Upon seeing this person, the Spirit tells St. Philip to do something. What is he commanded to do?
4. What surprising response does St. Philip receive from the person he meets? Why is St. Philip well suited to do what the person asks?
5. After hearing the gospel, the stranger makes a bold request. What does he ask Philip to do? How is the Spirit of the Lord's presence evident throughout this whole encounter with the stranger?

MY STORY

1. Think of a time you felt Spirit-led to do something that might have seemed odd to others around you. Describe the experience. What did you do?
2. Recall a time when you were in an unfamiliar place where you met someone very different from yourself. Describe the place and the people you met. How did you interact with them? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable during the interaction? What was the outcome of the interaction – what happened?
3. Do you believe God nudges you to do things sometimes that lead you to step out of your normal pattern of behavior or comfort zone? Why or why not?
4. Describe a time when you were just the right person at just the right time in a situation that provided an opportunity for you to serve another person. How might the Spirit of the Lord have created the opportunity for service you experienced?
5. What is your thought about baptism. How might hearing the good news of Jesus Christ compel a person to seek baptism as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. How does your baptism daily remind you of the good news of Jesus through which you receive salvation?

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Directions for Class

1. Open with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to open ears and hearts to the Word of God presented in the scripture of the day. Pray that the Holy Spirit speak through the discussion to enlighten the group with the message of the day.
2. Inform those gathered that all are welcome to reflect and comment on the scripture and that all voices will be respected, that all will be given an opportunity to speak where the Holy Spirit moves them. Though there may be participants present with more experience and knowledge of scripture, the Holy Spirit is the teacher of the class. All participants are students of the Word.
3. Appoint someone to read the scripture slowly and prayerfully so that all may hear and understand the reading.
4. Following the reading allow for a moment of silence, that all may absorb the reading.
5. Open the floor for discussion, starting with the God's Story questions.
6. Once the God's story questions have been explored, move to the My Story questions.
7. It is not necessary to discuss all questions. It is likely that you will run out of time before addressing all questions equally. Let the Spirit guide your selection of the questions addressed and the duration of your discussion.
8. Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for the enlightenment gained in discussion.