

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

SERIES 1: FOLLOW ME

LESSON 1.4: WATER IN THE DESERT

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The miracle of God's salvation is for anyone anywhere.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I believe and want to receive the miracle of salvation.

LESSON TEXT ACTS 8:26–39

KEY PASSAGE ACTS 8:36–38

³⁶ And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

TEACHING OUTLINE

ICEBREAKER: When have you been truly lost and didn't know your way out? How did you find your way out?

TEACHER TIP: Connect the group's answers to show that there is hope for anyone lost if we are willing to follow God who knows the way.

CONNECT: Share the Connect segment.

I. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION FOR EVERYONE

A. The Ethiopian's Influence

B. A Preacher Sent

DISCUSS: *What stories in Scripture show God sending someone at just the right time to deliver just the right message? What about in your life?*

C. God's salvation is for everyone, including me.

II. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION FOR EVERYWHERE

A. The Desert Called Gaza

DISCUSS: *In what "deserts" have you found God to be near to you? How can you remember those for future tough times?*

B. The Ethiopian's Hunger for God

C. God's salvation is for everywhere, including where I am.

III. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION

A. Belief and Baptism (V)

DISCUSS: *What are some things that might stand in the way of obeying the truths of Scripture once we learn them? How can we obey despite those seeming obstacles?*

B. I believe and want to receive the miracle of salvation.

APPLY: Share the Apply segment. (I)

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer for God to lead us to those who are sincerely seeking salvation.

CONNECT

IN 2019 HURRICANE Dorian was one of the most powerful Atlantic storms on record, intensifying into a Category 5 hurricane with sustained winds of 185 MPH and gusts over 220 MPH. On September 1, Dorian made landfall in the Bahamas, devastating Great Abaco and Grand Bahama islands. Homes collapsed, power grids failed, and thousands of people and animals were stranded amid floodwater and debris. By the time Dorian weakened and moved toward the United States two days later, it left seventy people dead and countless animals in danger.

Amid this chaos, a small dog was trapped under a collapsed air-conditioning unit in the rubble. Somehow he survived nearly a month without food, drinking only rainwater. For nearly four weeks, the dog was pinned under the debris of what was once a home—hidden, forgotten, yet still clinging to life. His body wasted away to skin and bones, dropping to just twenty pounds with severe muscle atrophy, parasites, abrasions, a respiratory infection, and stomach issues from malnutrition. Tragically, rescuers found the skeletal remains of another dog nearby, believed to have died about a week before they found the other dog clinging to life.

The breakthrough came on October 4, 2019, thanks to technology and resilient rescuers. They used a drone equipped with heat-seeking cameras to scan the ruins from above. These drones detected faint warmth in the wreckage—a fragile sign of life. Guided by that tiny heat signature, the team dug carefully by hand, every motion measured, unwilling to give up until they reached whoever, whatever, was alive. In that moment, the power of those who search for the lost was made visible: persistence meeting mercy in the dust of devastation.

Within hours, the dog—named Miracle by his rescuers—was airlifted to a rescue ranch where gentle hands replaced the rumble of machines. There he received IV fluids for dehydration, antibiotics for infection, deworming for parasites, and physical therapy to rebuild his atrophied muscles. He doubled his body weight in weeks. By late October, Miracle was wobbling on his legs, playing softly with toys, and giving “puppy kisses” to staff. His story spread quickly, a living reminder of what can happen when people choose not only to search but also to heal what they find.

The adoption response was overwhelming: More than ten thousand families applied to give him a forever home, proving how compassion multiplies when hope is restored. On November 19, 2019, Miracle found his forever home. His endurance reminds us that survival isn’t only physical; it’s the spark that calls others to rescue, to nurture, and to

restore. As people of God, we are called to answer the cries of the lost, hurting, and broken—to keep searching until we find them and to tend gently to what we have found. We should always be looking for the next miracle.

LEARN

I. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION FOR EVERYONE

A. The Ethiopian's Influence

The main character in the end of Acts 8 did not know he needed to be rescued, but he was about to be. He was a trusted official responsible for the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia. He lived a life of influence and affluence. Yet for all his position and privilege, there was something his power could not buy—peace with God. He was also a eunuch. His status carried not only physical implications but spiritual exclusion. According to Deuteronomy 23:1, eunuchs were not permitted to enter into the congregation of the Lord.

Still, this man had journeyed hundreds of miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem just to worship. Imagine his devotion—traveling across deserts, spending weeks on the road—knowing full well that once he arrived, he would be barred from being able to enter the Temple. That kind of effort reveals a heart deeply hungry for truth. He resiliently sought God despite rejection.

But what the Law excluded, grace would soon include. The promise of Isaiah 56:3–5 would soon ring in his heart: that one day God would give to eunuchs “a name better than of sons and of daughters.” To someone who could never have children, this promise spoke of eternal belonging. It hinted at a future when access to God would no longer depend on heritage, gender, or physical wholeness; but on faith.

When Philip met the eunuch, an encounter arranged by God Himself, it was more than a personal conversion story. It was the breaking open of a new era. The Ethiopian could not enter the Temple in Jerusalem, but soon, through faith, he would *become* the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). His salvation echoed the heart of the gospel—that in Christ, every barrier falls: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

In this one man's conversion, we see the gospel's power to reach across boundaries of race, status, and exclusion. The Ethiopian's story stands as a living testimony that God's grace seeks out every hungry heart, no matter how unlikely it seems.

B. A Preacher Sent

The divine meeting between Philip and the Ethiopian was no coincidence. Acts 8:26 declares that an angel of the Lord directed Philip to “arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” The Greek verbs here—translated *arise* and *go*—imply immediacy and obedience. It was an odd command. No congregation awaited him there, no crowd hungry for preaching, just a lonely, dusty road. Yet Philip obeyed without hesitation. Somewhere along that same road, a chariot rolled forward. Its passenger was reading aloud words about a suffering servant who was led as a sheep to the slaughter.

At that precise moment, the Spirit prompted Philip to go and approach that chariot. Philip ran to the chariot and

heard the Ethiopian official reading from what we now know as Isaiah 53. What unfolded next was a divine intersection of Scripture, Spirit, and soul. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading, and the exasperated eunuch said no. “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:31). Philip smiled and preached that the suffering servant was Jesus. Suddenly light broke through centuries of exclusion. Acts 8:35 records, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”

That verse captures the heart of every disciple’s calling—to start where the hearer is and lead that person to Jesus. Philip’s obedience turned a barren road into a place of revelation. God sends His messengers to the right people, in the right places, at exactly the right moments. Our role, like Philip’s, is to be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading, ready to speak life wherever God directs.

DISCUSS: *What stories in Scripture show God sending someone at just the right time to deliver just the right message? What about in your life?*

C. God’s salvation is for everyone, including me.

The Ethiopian’s story paints a picture of the boundless reach of God’s love. He was a man the world might have labeled “unworthy”—foreign, disfigured, and excluded, but God saw him differently: chosen, loved, and ready. That is why God sent him a preacher to preach the good news to him. The message of Acts 8 is clear: No background is too distant, no past is too broken, no life is too far gone.

The Ethiopian’s story, therefore, is not just a historical account; it’s a living message of hope. This story invites readers to see themselves in that chariot—to realize God’s grace has come down the same dusty road to meet them. Salvation is not for a privileged few; it is for *everyone*, including you.

II. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION FOR EVERYWHERE

A. The Desert Called Gaza

The setting of this encounter is striking: a lonely, sun-scorching road through the desert toward Gaza. It was a place of dryness and desolation—hardly the setting one would expect for revival. Yet that’s where God sent Philip. The Greek text of Acts 8:26 emphasizes it was a *specific* and *desolate* route, a reminder that God works powerfully in unlikely places. Gaza was once a Philistine stronghold and a place of ancient conflict. It was not a likely center of worship; it was a symbol of distance from God’s covenant people. Yet God chose that barren location for a life-changing encounter.

Scripture often shows God meeting His people in barren places: Hagar weeping by a desert spring (Genesis 16:7–14), Moses before a burning bush in the wilderness (Exodus 3:1–6), and now, an Ethiopian reading from the prophet Isaiah in a chariot in a desert toward Gaza. This message is also clear: No place is too remote for God’s presence to change it.

The desert reminds us that God’s power is not limited to sacred spaces or city temples. He also shows up in the quiet, forgotten corners of life. Philip’s obedience turned an empty road into holy ground. Psalm 139:7–8 declares this beautifully: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into

heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” Even in the dry places, God brings life. The Gaza road stands as proof that God’s salvation can appear anywhere His Spirit leads.

DISCUSS: *In what “deserts” have you found God to be near to you? How can you remember those for future tough times?*

B. The Ethiopian’s Hunger for God

The Ethiopian had just left Jerusalem disappointed—excluded from the Temple but not from hope. He likely purchased a costly copy of the scroll of Isaiah. He read on, searching for understanding. That persistence reveals a deep spiritual hunger. His heart was ready and teachable, and in that holy, teachable moment, God met him.

The eunuch sought God with all his heart, and God faithfully revealed Himself. The Spirit used Philip to teach the Scriptures, to reveal the Messiah the eunuch had been seeking all along. This is how God works still—meeting spiritual hunger with divine revelation most often mediated through other people. Those who seek Him with all their hearts will surely find Him.

C. God’s salvation is for everywhere, including where I am.

This conversion that took place on a barren stretch of road is a reminder that God’s grace knows no boundaries. Salvation came, not just in the Temple or in a synagogue, but in a desert. Many first-century citizens considered Ethiopia as the end of the earth, and with the Ethiopian eunuch hearing and responding to the gospel, the gospel was reaching “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Wherever you are—geographically, emotionally, or spiritually—God’s presence can meet you there. This story is proof that no environment is too dry, no situation too desolate, for God to bring forth life. He meets us, not only in sanctuaries, but also in the solitude of the road, in the questions of our hearts, and in the quiet places where we seek Him. The story declares that God’s salvation is *everywhere*—not just in Jerusalem or Judea, but in Samaria, Gaza, and Ethiopia. From deserts to city streets, God’s Spirit is at work, reaching hearts that hunger for Him.

III. THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION

A. Belief and Baptism

As Philip unfolded the story of Jesus from the inspired pages of Isaiah, the eunuch’s heart came alive. They passed by a pool of water, and the eunuch excitedly exclaimed, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Clearly Philip was preaching the gospel and our right response to the gospel: repentance from sin, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the infilling of the Holy Ghost, just like we read of in Jerusalem and in Samaria.

In that unlikely spot, beneath the blazing sun, a miracle took place. They were surrounded by sand and silence, but one man asked to be buried in water and raised to new life in Christ. His faith was genuine, his response immediate. Philip told him, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:37). And he did.

In that moment, that dusty desert became holy ground—proof that salvation is complete wherever faith meets

obedience. Mark 16:16 echoes this truth: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The act of baptism in that desert place shows the fullness of God’s plan, that belief and obedience work together in the miracle of salvation.

(V) PLAY VIDEO NOW

DISCUSS: *What are some things that might stand in the way of obeying the truths of Scripture once we learn them? How can we obey despite those seeming obstacles?*

B. I believe and want to receive the miracle of salvation.

Though Acts does not explicitly mention the eunuch receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, his joy upon returning home speaks volumes. Acts 8:39 declares: “He went on his way rejoicing”—the unmistakable mark of a heart touched by God. Based on Acts 2:38 which links repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit as the new birth, the eunuch’s conversion fits this pattern.

For each believer today, the eunuch’s example invites a personal response: to believe, repent, be baptized, and receive the Spirit’s transforming power. Like the Ethiopian, every person who embraces the gospel becomes part of God’s great redemptive story. Wherever you are, whoever you are, God still meets travelers on the road and turns deserts into places of joy and making outsiders His own.

TEACHER OPTION: *Tell the story below, or share one of your own to illustrate how we must trust God and others when we don’t know the way.*

APPLY

(I) DISPLAY IMAGE NOW

ROSELLE WAS A golden Labrador retriever born on March 12, 1998. She received two years of training in harness work, obstacle avoidance, and remaining calm under stress. She was then placed with Michael Hingson, who had been blind since infancy, as his fifth seeing-eye dog. She soon became his trusted companion—one who would not only guide his steps but also remind him of the strength found in following.

On September 11, 2001, fifty-one-year-old Michael Hingson arrived early at his job on the seventy-eighth floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Roselle napped under his desk as he printed documents. At 8:46 AM, American Airlines Flight 11 slammed into floors ninety-three through ninety-nine, about fifteen stories above. The impact hurled Hingson from his chair, shattering glass and igniting fires. Roselle awoke among screams and alarms but stayed composed, not even barking. Colleagues panicked, but Hingson calmly assessed: “The building is on fire. We have to get out.” In that moment, roles reversed—he, the team leader, had to place complete trust in his guide. Roselle led him to Stairwell B, the only open path, where she guided Hingson and several colleagues down 1,463 steps—equivalent to scaling the Washington Monument four times.

The descent took over an hour in a gauntlet of heat, thick smoke reeking of jet fuel, malfunctioning sprinklers

drenching them, and chaos. They navigated around overturned furniture, injured people, and firefighters heading up. Roselle ignored distractions, including falling debris pelting the surging crowds rushing toward safety, and stopped only once to alert Hingson to a dangerous drop where stairs had buckled. Halfway down they paused on the fiftieth floor as the South Tower collapsed at 9:59 AM, the rumble shaking the structure like an earthquake. Even then, Roselle's steady harness and calm presence reminded Hingson that courage sometimes means letting yourself be led.

Emerging at ground level around 10:25 AM, they faced suffocating dust clouds. Roselle navigated to a subway station, where Hingson helped a dust-blinded woman before Roselle led him forty blocks north to a friend's apartment in Battery Park—just three minutes before the North Tower imploded at 10:28 AM. "Roselle was absolutely perfect," Hingson later said. "While everyone ran in panic, she remained totally focused." Many saw in their story a living picture of how guidance, freely accepted, can steady even the most fearful heart.

After the September 11 attacks, Hingson and Roselle became icons of hope. They appeared on several news shows, sharing how trust transcends disability. Roselle earned the 2002 AKC Award for Canine Excellence and the Dickin Medal, often called the "animal Victoria Cross," for her heroism that day. Roselle retired in 2007 and passed peacefully on June 26, 2011, at thirteen years old. In every stage of her life, Roselle reminded the world that courage does not always come from seeing the way ahead—but from following faithfully when someone else can.