

Open Bible Stories — Stephen and Philip

Introduction

Key Idea

The story of Stephen and Philip teaches us how the gospel spreads through martyrdom and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Core Belief Verse

"So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:32-33.

God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham.

He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife, and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from slavery.

God judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people, who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan.

God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies.

God formed Israel into a kingdom.

He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that would rule his people forever.

Many of Israel's kings were evil, and the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

God sent prophets to warn his people of God's judgment and call them to repent.

When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile.

After many years, he brought them back to the land.

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people from their sin.

After many years, the prophet John was born.

He would prepare people for the coming Messiah.

At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary.

When John and Jesus grew up, John baptized Jesus as a sign that Jesus was God's beloved Son.

Jesus endured all manner of temptation without ever sinning.

When he was thirty years old, he launched a public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

He taught his disciples about the life of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Jesus performed many miracles: he fed a crowd of five thousand, he walked on water, he healed the sick, and he cast out demons.

He proclaimed to people the nature of real faith, God's kingdom, and how fallen humans can be restored in relationship with God.

Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus revealed his power and glory to his disciples.

He raised a dead man to life.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples and put on trial before a Roman governor.

Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified on a cross.

Three days later, Jesus rose again from the dead.

After meeting with many of his disciples, Jesus went back to heaven.

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' followers and formed them into his church.

Jesus' disciples, like Peter and John, performed miracles and preached the good news about Jesus.

New leaders like Stephen and Philip served the church and preached about Jesus.

The Story: Stephen and Philip

45-01



One of the leaders among the first followers of Jesus was a man named Stephen. Everyone respected him. The Holy Spirit gave him much power and wisdom. Stephen did many miracles. Many people believed him when he taught them to trust in Jesus.

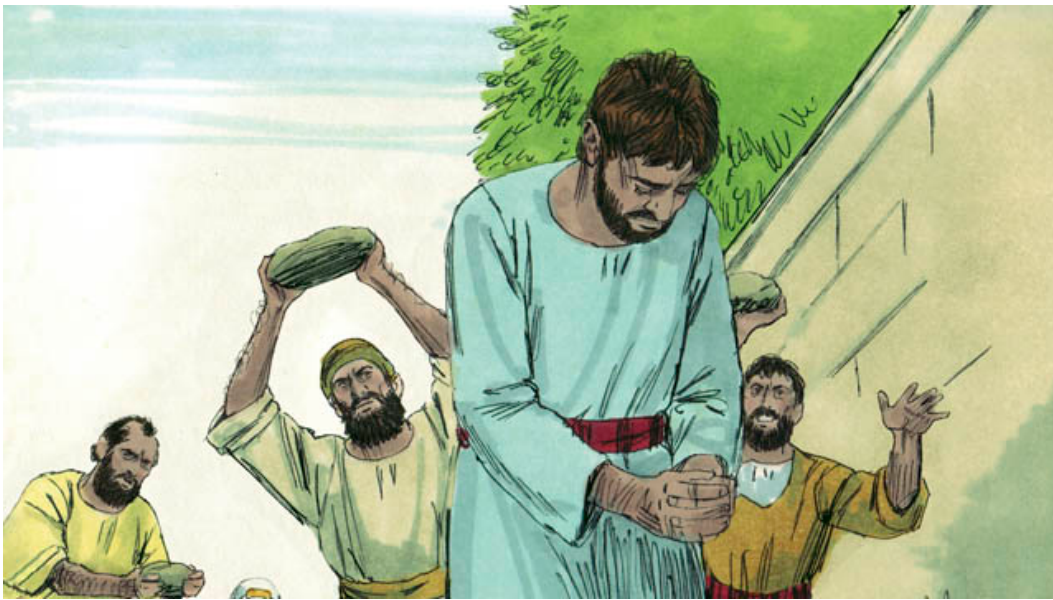


One day when Stephen was teaching about Jesus, some Jews who did not believe in Jesus came and began to argue with him. They became very angry, so they went to the religious leaders and told lies about him. They said, "We heard Stephen speak evil things about Moses and God!" So the religious leaders arrested Stephen and brought him to the high priest and the other leaders of the Jews. More false witnesses came and lied to them about Stephen.



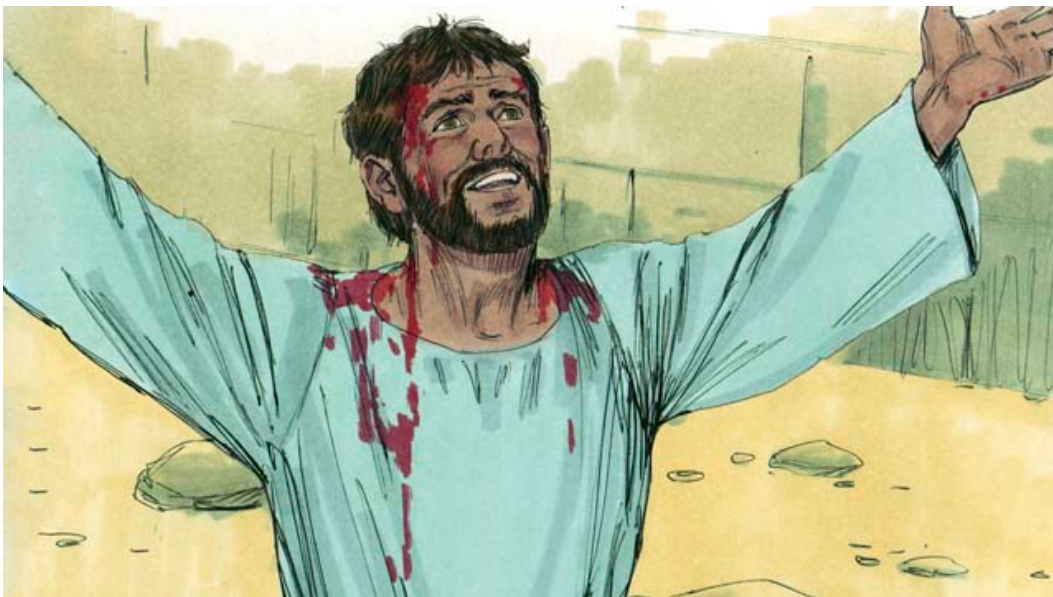
The high priest asked Stephen, "Are these men telling the truth about you?" Stephen began to say many things in order to answer the high priest. He said that God had done many wonderful things for the people of Israel from the time when Abraham lived to the time of Jesus. But the people had always disobeyed God. Stephen said, "You people are stubborn and rebellious against God. You always reject the Holy Spirit, just as our ancestors always rejected God and always killed his prophets. But you did something worse than they did! You killed the Messiah!"

45-04



When the religious leaders heard this, they were so angry that they covered their ears and yelled loudly. They dragged Stephen out of the city and threw stones at him in order to kill him.

45-05



As Stephen was dying, he cried out, "Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees and cried out again, "Master, do not hold this sin against them." Then he died.



That day many people in Jerusalem started persecuting the followers of Jesus, so the believers fled to other places. But in spite of this, they preached about Jesus everywhere they went.



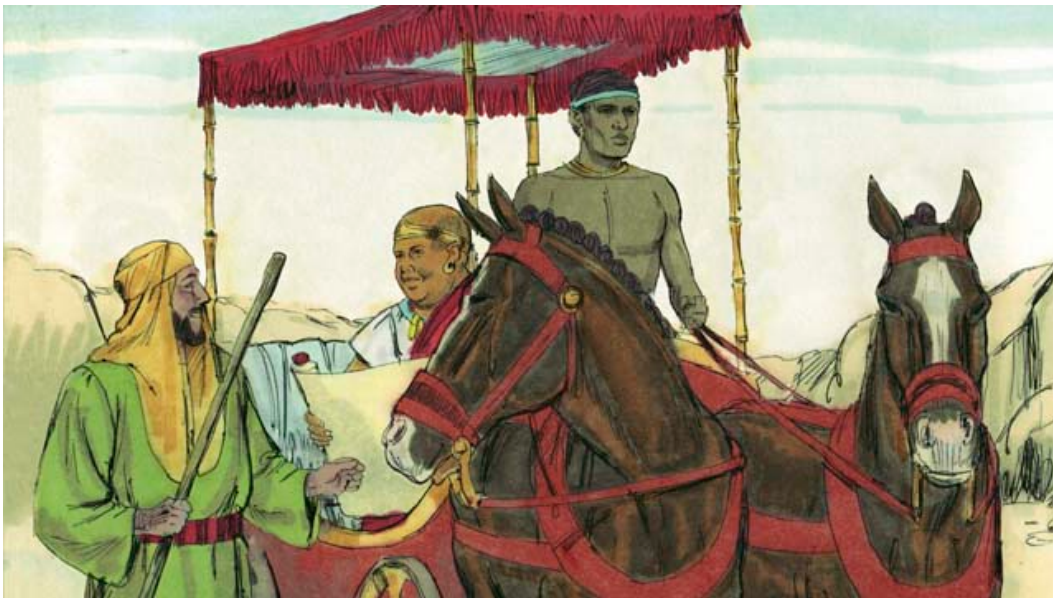
There was a believer in Jesus named Philip. He fled from Jerusalem, as did most other believers. He went to the region of Samaria, where he preached to people about Jesus. Many people believed him and were saved. One day, an angel came from God to Philip and told him to go into the wilderness, and to walk down a certain road. Philip went there. As he was walking on the road, he saw a man riding in his chariot. This man was an important official from the land of Ethiopia. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go and talk with this man.

45-08



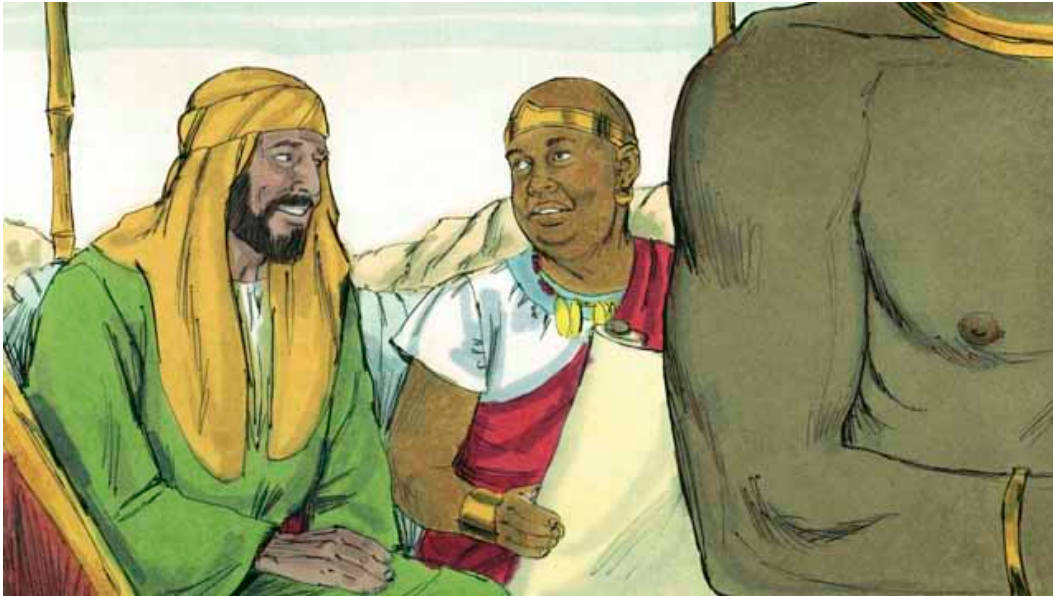
So Philip went to the chariot. He heard the Ethiopian reading God's word. He was reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. The man read, "They led him like a lamb to be killed, and as a lamb is silent, he did not say a word. They treated him unfairly and did not respect him. They took his life away from him."

45-09



Philip asked the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian replied, "No. I cannot understand it unless someone explains it to me. Please come and sit next to me. Was Isaiah writing about himself or someone else?"

45-10



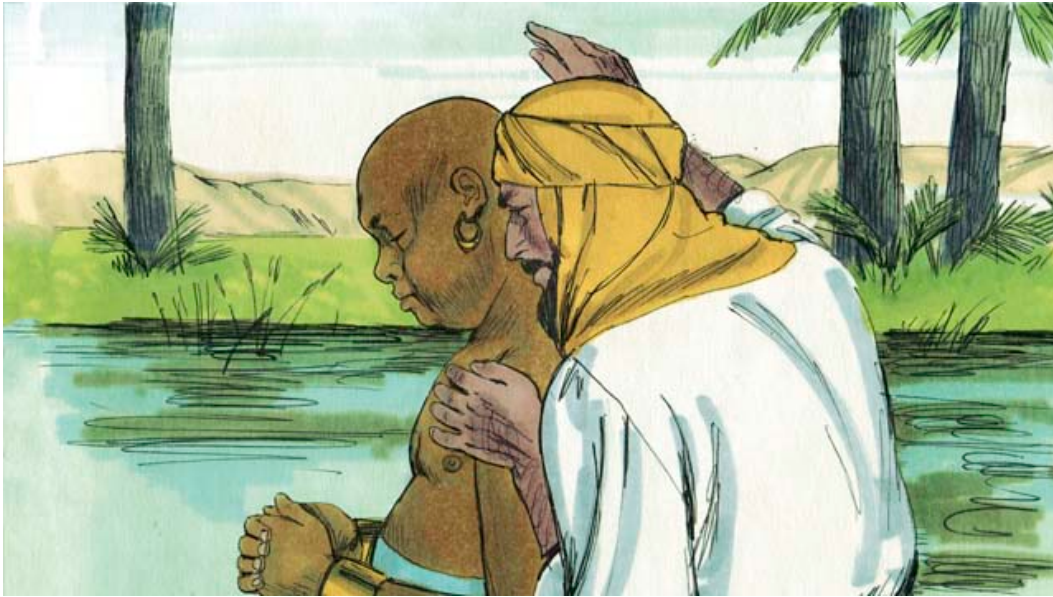
Philip got into the chariot and sat down. Then he told the Ethiopian man that Isaiah had written about Jesus. Philip also spoke about many other parts of God's word. In this way, he told the man the good news about Jesus.

45-11



As Philip and the Ethiopian traveled, they came to some water. The Ethiopian said, "Look! There is some water! May I be baptized?" And he told the driver to stop the chariot.

45-12



So they went down into the water, and Philip baptized the Ethiopian. After they came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit suddenly carried Philip away to another place. There Philip continued to tell people about Jesus.

45-13



The Ethiopian continued traveling toward his home. He was happy that he now knew Jesus.

A Bible story from: Acts 6-8

Community Study: Christlike Community— Clothing Ourselves with Christ's Character

- **Key Idea:** exemplifying the character of Christ in our relationship with each other
- **Key Passage:** Colossians 3:12-17
- **Main Session:** OBS 45 (Stephen and Philip)

Recite the Core Belief Verse (3–5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

15 He disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, by being victorious over them by the cross. Colossians 2:15

OR

13 He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. 14 In his Son we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

Reflect on God's Power (5–10 minutes)

God is powerful enough to change people and communities. The powers of darkness are not more powerful than God. God has full authority and power over Satan and his evil forces. Discuss together how you experienced God's power in your own life.

I have experienced God's power over evil in these ways...

Read the Passage (3–5 minutes)

Jesus rules over all. He rules over the forces of darkness. And, Jesus rules over the hearts of his people. When Jesus reigns supreme, his people begin to look like Christ. Read the passage below to learn about the characteristics of believers when Christ rules.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, put on a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another. Be gracious to each other. If someone has a complaint against someone else, forgive in the same way that the Lord has forgiven you. 14 Above all these things, have love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. It was for this peace that you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ live in you richly. With all wisdom teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Sing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

Discuss the Passage (10-15 minutes)

Christians embody the characteristics of Christ. These characteristics become true of our personal lives and community as we allow Jesus to rule and reign. As a community, use the following questions to discuss the teaching of the biblical passage.

1. What key characteristics should mark Christians? How are these characteristics exemplified in

Christ?

1. What is the opposite of these characteristics? What negative characteristics do we need to

renounce/remove if we want to live like Christ?

1. What are the instructions in this passage? How does this passage teach us to develop these

characteristics in our lives and community?

1. What concrete actions and practices can your community take so that these characteristics are true

of your community?

Celebrate the Present (5 minutes)

Think about the change that God has powerfully brought into your life. Take time as a community to

celebrate this change and name the specific characteristics listed in this passage. Use the following short prompts to help guide your time of testimony.

In the past I/we were like this...

Now, God's power has changed us so that we are like this...

Pray to God (5 minutes)

Pray as a whole community that God would help your community be more like the description in this passage. Use the passage above to guide your prayer.

Sing a Song (3-5 minutes)

Identify a song that celebrates the character of Christ. Sing this song joyfully together.

Movement 1: Understand the Story

Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.

Observation Questions

45-01

What was the name of the key Christian leader at the beginning of this story?

One of the leaders from the first followers of Jesus was named Stephen.

What do we learn about Stephen?

Everyone respected him, the Holy Spirit gave him much power and wisdom, and he did many miracles.

How did many people respond to Stephen's teaching?

Many people believed him when he taught them to trust in Jesus.

45-02

How did some of the Jews who did not believe in Jesus respond to Stephen's teaching?

Some of the Jews that did not believe in Jesus argued with Stephen. They became angry and told lies about Stephen to the religious leaders.

What was the false charge that some Jews brought against Stephen?

They said they heard Stephen speak evil things about Moses and God.

What did the religious leaders do to Stephen?

The religious leaders arrested Stephen and brought him to the high priest and other Jewish leaders.

Who else came to testify against Stephen?

More false witnesses told lies about Stephen.

45-03

What did the high priest ask Stephen?

The high priest asked Stephen if the witnesses were speaking true things about him.

How did Stephen respond to the high priest?

Stephen said God did many wonderful things for the people of Israel, but the Israelites always disobeyed God.

What did Stephen say about the people?

Stephen told the people they were stubborn, rebellious, and always rejected the Holy Spirit, just as the Jewish ancestors did.

What did Stephen say the people had done that was worse than their ancestors?

They killed the Messiah.

45-04

How did the religious leaders respond to Stephen's rebuke?

The religious leaders were so angry they covered their ears and yelled loudly.

How did the religious leaders react to Stephen's accusation?

They dragged Stephen out of the city and threw stones at him in order to kill him.

45-05

What did Stephen say as he was dying?

As Stephen was dying, he said, "Jesus, receive my spirit."

What was the last thing Stephen said before he died?

The last thing he said was, "Master, do not hold this sin against them."

45-06

What happened to the believers on the day Stephen was killed?

On the day Stephen was killed, many people in Jerusalem started persecuting followers of Jesus.

What did the believers do when the persecution began in Jerusalem?

They fled to other places and preached about Jesus wherever they went.

Did the believers stop preaching about Jesus?

No. The believers continued to preach about Jesus everywhere they went, even though they were persecuted.

45-07

What Christian leader ministered in Samaria?

Philip was a Christian leader who fled from Jerusalem and preached about Jesus to the people in Samaria.

How did people respond to Philip's preaching?

Many people believed and were saved.

What did an angel tell Philip to do?

One day, an angel told Philip to go into the wilderness and walk on a certain road.

Who did Philip meet on the road in the wilderness?

He met an important official from Ethiopia who was riding in his chariot.

What did the Holy Spirit tell Philip?

The Holy Spirit told Philip to go and talk with Ethiopian official.

45-08

What was the Ethiopian official doing as Philip approached?

He was reading what the prophet Isaiah wrote.

What did the portion of Isaiah say?

That particular passage in Isaiah said that people would lead the Messiah to slaughter, the Messiah would remain silent, people would mistreat and disrespect him, and people would kill him.

45-09

What question did Philip ask the Ethiopian official?

Philip asked the Ethiopian official if he understood what he was reading.

Did the official understand the prophecy that he was reading?

No, he needed someone to explain it to him.

What did Ethiopian official invite Philip to do?

The Ethiopian official invited Philip to sit next to him and explain whether Isaiah was speaking about himself or someone else.

45-10

Did Philip accept the invitation of the Ethiopian official?

Yes. Philip got into the chariot and sat down.

Who did Philip say Isaiah had written about?

He said Isaiah had written about Jesus.

What else did Philip explain to the Ethiopian official?

Philip spoke from many other parts of God's word and told the man the good news about Jesus.

45-11

After Philip explained the prophecy and they came to some water, what did the Ethiopian ask Philip?

The Ethiopian asked if he could be baptized and told the driver to stop the chariot.

45-12

What did Philip and the Ethiopian do after the driver stopped the chariot?

Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water, and Philip baptized the Ethiopian.

What happened to Philip after he baptized the Ethiopian official?

The Holy Spirit carried Philip away to another place.

What did Philip continue to do after he was taken away?

After the Holy Spirit carried Philip to another place, Philip continued to tell people about Jesus.

45-13

What did the Ethiopian official do after Philip left him?

He continued traveling toward his home, happy that he knew Jesus.

Movement 2: Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. What are the core elements of the gospel? What aspects of the gospel were evident in this story of the ministry of Stephen and Philip?
2. How do people variously respond to the gospel? How does this story show different reactions to the gospel?
3. How does God bring about the spread of the gospel? What does this story teach about how God caused the gospel to spread and more people to come to believe in Jesus?

Movement 3: Live It Out

Personal Implications & Applications From The Story

Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.

1. How has this story continued to solidify your belief in the gospel?
2. What kind of persecution and mistreatment have you experienced because of your faith in Jesus?

3. How has God arranged circumstances for you to share the gospel with others?
4. Think about this week. Where does "Stephen and Philip" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of Stephen and Philip teaches us how the gospel spreads through martyrdom and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Movement 4: Retell the Story

Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.

1. Can someone retell "Stephen and Philip" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

Church Ministry

Reflect on how this story can edify and mature the Christian community. Design a way to minister this story to your church community.

Ministry Preparation: Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. Record some ministry ideas below.

Ministry Implementation: Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with other believers. Record your ministry plan below.

Ministry Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. Reflect on your experience below.

Movement 5: Share It

Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.

1. Who is one specific person you will share "Stephen and Philip" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Mission Engagement

Consider how you will witness this story to unbelievers. Design a way to share this story and engage them in what it teaches about Christianity and the gospel.

Witness Preparation: Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. Record some ideas below.

Witness Implementation: Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with other believers. Record your ministry plan below.

Witness Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to unbelievers. Reflect on your experience below.