

Volume 13 Issue 3

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OPENINGS

The familiar account of the Ethiopian treasurer's conversion by Philip the evangelist (Acts 8:27-39) features a remarkable number of **openings**. Let's consider these.

First, the Holy Spirit led Philip to an **open door**. The eunuch was a devout man, having traveled hundreds of miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God. Sometimes we're reluctant to share the good news with people we believe "have their own religion." *They'll never change*, we think. But doesn't it make sense to share the gospel with people who have already evidenced an interest in

the things of God?

Philip found in the eunuch an **open heart**. When Philip asked him, "*Do you understand what you are reading?*" the man from Ethiopia replied, "*How can I, unless someone guides me?*" (verses 30-31). Even though this man already knew the Scriptures, he recognized that his understanding was incomplete. He was willing, even eager, to listen and learn.

Philip began the conversation with the eunuch's **open Scriptures**, and he never let them close: "*Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this*

Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (verse 35). Philip didn't start talking about his personal opinions, or some philosopher whose works he'd read, or the latest religious theories spouted by the wise men at his local synagogue. He **opened his mouth** with the word of God. (Isn't it strange that most religious discussions these days never quite get around to **opening the Book**?)

The treasurer responded to Philip's teaching with an **open request**: "*See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?*" (verse 36). He didn't argue with the gospel. He didn't try to deny the command Philip had put before him while he "*preached Jesus to him.*" He simply asked for the opportunity to do what needed to be done for the salvation of his soul.

Philip sought an **open confession** from the eunuch: "*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*" The man from Ethiopia immediately

replied: "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (verse 37). Philip didn't insist that the eunuch subscribe to any creed, or swear by any humanly devised catechism, articles of faith, discipline or doctrine. He invited the Ethiopian to state openly and plainly what he now believed, and the eunuch did just that.

Having stopped the chariot, the two men went down together into **open water** (verse 38). We don't read about Philip dipping his hand into a basin or a puddle, then sprinkling or pouring water on his companion's head. The very reason the eunuch stopped in this location was that there was abundant water here, just as there had been in Aenon where John the baptizer preached (John 3:23).

The treasurer submitted willingly to an act of **open obedience**: "*Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*" Philip didn't just tell the man that

because of his faith, his sins were “already forgiven,” as would many religious teachers today. Nor did the eunuch pray a “sinner’s prayer” or any such device. Jesus Christ, through the preaching of the gospel, commanded him to be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and this humble man obeyed.

When the eunuch had been baptized, he engaged in **open celebration**: “*He went on his way rejoicing*” (verse 39).

How many **openings** have you missed recently? How many **open doors** did you pass by this past week? With how many **open hearts** did you fail to **open the Scriptures**?

And if you’re not a Christian, why not make the same **open request** and **open confession** the man from Ethiopia made, then openly **obey the gospel** by being buried in **open water**? Then you can **openly rejoice** at God’s gracious forgiveness

of your sins.

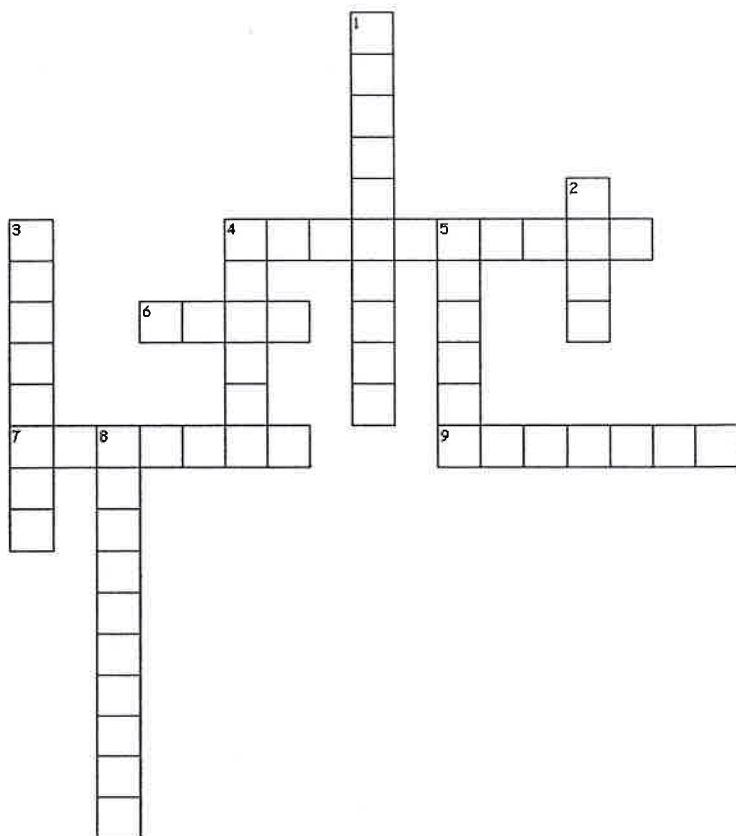
— Michael D. Rankins



James reminds us not to curse men since they have been made in the likeness of God. “With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh,”
James 3:9-12

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ACROSS

4. God will provide an escape to be able to endure this. (1 Cor. 10:13)
6. Paul said to eat here if you're hungry and not as the church. (1 Cor. 11:34)
7. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love _____. (1 Cor. 8:1)
9. It was a sin to eat meat if you caused your brother to do this. (1 Cor. 8:13)

DOWN

1. Paul did this to his body so he would not be disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:27)
2. Even if you had all faith, without this you would still be nothing. (1 Cor. 13:2)
3. More than speaking in tongues, Paul wished they all did this. (1 Cor. 14:5)
4. Your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you. (1 Cor. 6:19)
5. Paul reminded the Corinthians they would judge these. (1 Cor. 6:3)
8. The body is for the Lord, not for this. (1 Cor. 6:13)