

# TRUTH & RIGHT

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## OPEN TO THE TRUTH

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

David often struggled with an overwhelming sense of shame after his sin of adultery and murder. "My sin is ever before me," (Ps. 51:3). Paul also never seemed to be able to shake off his memories of his life as a persecutor of the Church, believing himself to be unfit to be called an Apostle (1 Cor. 15:9). Perhaps you also struggle at times with the memories of past sin in your life and carry a burden of shame you can't seem to rid yourself of. There is the story of two brothers who were caught stealing sheep that might help.

As part of their punishment they were branded with large capital letters S. S. on their foreheads. One brother had an awful time living with the permanently attached stigma he could never get rid of. He constantly lived on the run, from town to town, as everyone always wanted to know what the initials stood for, he could never bear the shame the memories brought him and was constantly trying to escape his past, only to have it brought up again and again wherever he went. The other brother stayed in the same town where the very crime was committed and was determined to dedicate his life to helping and serving those around him. Years later the scars on his forehead began to diminish to where they were almost unrecognizable. One day a stranger moved to the area and asked a neighbor about the "S.S." on the old man's face. The neighbor responded, "We're not really all that sure, but we think it means he's the Savior's Servant." "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," (Philip. 3:13-14).

# BIBLE TRIVIA

## C H A L L E N G E

**DIRECTIONS:** After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

**1. Jesus healed Peter's Mother-in-law, who was sick with a \_\_\_\_.**

- a) Cold
- b) Fever
- c) Rash
- d) Virus

**2. Jesus once healed a leper by stretching out His hand and \_\_\_\_.**

- a) Pointing
- b) Motioning
- c) Waving
- d) Touching him

**3. A woman was healed of a hemorrhage by touching \_\_\_\_.**

- a) Jesus
- b) Apostles
- c) Scripture
- d) Magic stones

**4. 10 lepers were cleansed by Jesus, who told them to show themselves to \_\_\_\_.**

- a) Apostles
- b) The public
- c) Magicians
- d) Priests

**5. After putting clay on a blind man's eyes, Jesus told him to \_\_\_\_ in the pool of Siloam.**

- a) Wash
- b) Swim
- c) Splash
- d) Stand

**6. Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said to \_\_\_\_ the stone against his tomb.**

- a) Hit
- b) Place
- c) Knock on
- d) Remove

**7. In answer to a royal official begging Jesus to come heal his son, Jesus said, "Go, your son \_\_\_\_."**

- a) Dies
- b) Cries
- c) Lives
- d) Walks

**8. Jesus said to a paralytic brought to Him to heal, "Your sins are \_\_\_\_."**

- a) Bad
- b) Forgiven
- c) Many
- d) Big

**9. In the company of loud mourners, Jesus said, "The child has not died, but is \_\_\_\_."**

- a) Faking
- b) Alive
- c) Asleep
- d) Sick

**10. At a funeral procession for a dead man, Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you, \_\_\_\_."**

- a) Speak
- b) Walk
- c) Live
- d) Arise

### ANSWERS & VERSES:

- 1) B, Reference: Mk. 1:30-31
- 2) D, Reference: Mk. 1:40-41
- 3) A, Reference: Lk. 8:43-46
- 4) D, Reference: Lk. 17:14
- 5) A, Reference: Jn. 9:6-7
- 6) D, Reference: Jn. 11:39

- 7) C, Jn. 4:46-50
- 8) B, Mt. 9:2
- 9) C, Mk. 5:38-39
- 10) D, Lk. 7:11-14