

Do You Understand What You Are Reading?

Acts 8:26–40 | Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

“Do you understand what you are reading?” He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” (Acts 8:30–31)

1. A Desert Road... with Divine Directions

This scene begins with a strange command from an angel:

“Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert road.” (v.26)

Now if most of us heard that in prayer, we’d say: *“A desert road? That doesn’t sound like ministry success!”*

But that’s exactly where God sends Philip.

This shows us: **God’s will isn’t always “efficient” by human standards—but it’s always precise.**

God doesn’t waste time or travel. There is someone waiting on that road. And Philip says yes.

Sometimes we think our greatest ministry happens in cathedrals. But sometimes it happens in **chariots on desert roads.**

2. “Do You Understand What You Are Reading?” – The Need for Evangelization

Philip sees a high-ranking Ethiopian official reading Isaiah. This man is devout. He’s educated. But he’s still **confused.**

So Philip asks the most important evangelization question:

“Do you understand what you are reading?” (v.30)

And the eunuch replies with the humility of a true seeker:

“How can I, unless someone instructs me?”

This is the heart of the Catholic mission:

- **Scripture alone is not self-interpreting.**
- **We need the Church**—her Tradition, her teaching authority, her apostolic ministers—to **open the Scriptures** with the light of Christ.

St. Jerome said, *“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”* But we could add: **misinterpretation of Scripture can lead away from Christ.** That’s why God sends Philip—not just a scroll.

3. Jesus Is the Lamb – The Christological Key

The Ethiopian eunuch is reading from **Isaiah 53**, the “Suffering Servant” passage:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter... In his humiliation justice was denied him.” (v.32–33)

The eunuch asks, *“Is the prophet talking about himself or someone else?”*

This is the moment Philip was made for:

“Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this Scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him.”
(v.35)

Philip doesn’t offer a motivational talk. He doesn’t offer vague spiritual encouragement. He **preaches Jesus Christ crucified and risen**—the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

This is catechesis. This is apologetics. This is the fulfillment of prophecy.

4. **“Look, Here Is Water!” – Scripture Leads to Sacraments**

And then, the surprise:

“Look, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?” (v.36)

That’s the power of the Gospel! When preached authentically, it leads to the sacraments—not just private devotion.

The Ethiopian eunuch saw the **connection between Scripture, Jesus, and the need for baptism**—and he **asks for it himself**.

This is a beautiful argument **against sola scriptura** and **for sacramental faith**. Even the early Church did not separate the Word from the water.

5. **Evangelization to the Ends of the Earth**

The Ethiopian eunuch is traditionally seen as the **first Gentile convert** in Acts who comes from beyond Israel—a **sign that the Gospel is meant for all nations**.

After his baptism, he **goes on rejoicing**, bringing the faith back to Ethiopia. Philip? He’s taken to another town, already preaching.

The Spirit moves quickly when hearts are open.

Who Are We in the Story?

- **Are we like the eunuch?** Hungry, searching, reading, but needing guidance? The Church is ready to teach.
- **Are we like Philip?** Sent by God to a place that seems dry and unknown—but someone there is waiting for Christ.
- **Are we ready to ask, “What is preventing me?”** Preventing me from deeper prayer, from baptism, from surrender, from joy?

God works powerfully on desert roads—because no road is empty when the Spirit sends us.

So go out, like Philip. Listen, explain, and baptize.

Because the world is filled with chariots carrying searching souls—and Jesus wants to ride along.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.