

Story 3: Philip and the Eunuch

God's  Changes Everything.

Remember to set up your space: Altar cloth in the center of your circle, unlit candle in the middle, letter tiles scattered, water filled water bottle, flip flop, question mark, and scripture book around the candle.

You should also designate a space for the gathering game. Use a separate larger room. Youth will need to stand against the walls. Throughout the room set obstacles. These obstacles can be chairs, bean bags, pieces of paper, whatever is available to you. You want enough obstacles that there is no clear path through the room. See the picture in the gathering game section of this lesson for a general idea of layout.)

Additional Supplies needed:

Copies of "Ordinary Talent" half sheets

Copies of Worksheet

Pencils, pens or markers

Blindfolds

OPENING RITUAL:

Leader: **We gather together as God's people, intentionally seeking a word from God, believing that God's word has the power to change us.**

LETTER TILES FOR THIS SESSION: Leave the other letters scattered, pull out the letters G-R-A-C-E, spelling the word GRACE on your altar area.

STORY FOCUS: God's grace changes everything.

GATHERING ACTIVITY:

Gather in your circle. Give everyone one of the half sheets of paper that says "My Ordinary Talent." Have them write down one specific "ordinary talent" that they have. Offer these examples: *I can add triple digit numbers in my head. I can fully function with only an hour of sleep. I am really good at telling when one of my friends is hurting.* Then go around the circle and have everyone share their name and their ordinary talent with the group. After they share they should fold their paper along the dotted line to make a "tent" and stand it up in front of them to display their ordinary talent to the group.

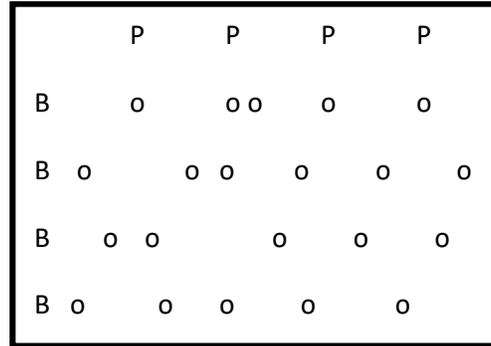
After everyone has shared, have them get into pairs with someone who they consider to have a vastly different “ordinary talent” from their own. For example: “*I can reach stuff on the high shelves no one else can reach*” verses “*I can read a 500 page book in a day*”.

Move to your pre-set space defined in the “lesson set up” above. Have all the pairs stand on one side of the room. Each pair should then select one person to be blindfolded. The blindfolded partner should stay at the end of the room. The person in the pair without the blindfold should find any spot to stand along the side of the room.

B – blindfolded partners

P – unblindfolded partners

O - obstacles



On “go” the partners without blindfolds should try to direct their blindfolded partner through the room of obstacles to the opposite wall. If the blindfolded partner touches any obstacle on their way across the room, they must go back and start over. If you as a leader see youth easily making their way across the room, move obstacles into their path.

When everyone has made it to the other end of the room, gather as a large group and ask:

Blindfolded partners: How did it go? What made this activity difficult? What went well?

Partners giving directions: How did it go? What made this activity difficult? What went well?

(Strive to get answers such as “there were too many voices”, “I couldn’t hear or tell which one was my partner”, “they weren’t listening”, “there were too many things in the way”.)

Explain that you are going to try the game one more time. The same people will remain blindfolded, but this time partners giving directions may walk alongside of their blindfolded partner. Play this round.

Gather as a large group again and discuss:

What was different about this round? What made it easier? Was anything more difficult?

What were some of the techniques you used to lead your partner through the room? Were there differences in how the pairs worked together?

(Strive to get answers such as “It was so much easier to be side by side”)

Remember this game for later. Return to your circle for the story.

THE STORY:

Background: **Jesus has been crucified and raised again. After ascending into Heaven, God sends the Holy Spirit to the disciples and the work of the church begins.**

Read Acts 2 printed below:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

RITUAL ACTION: Light the Candle

Leader: **God comes to us, ordinary people, and breaths into us the Holy Spirit, God's presence with us, enabling us to share the word as the Spirit gives us ability.**

Leader: **The disciples, now apostles, scatter from place to place proclaiming the word of the risen Messiah (Acts 8). While Peter and John return to Jerusalem to proclaim the word to the villages of Samaritans, Philip is led by God to a different road.**

Ask for a volunteer to read from "The Word" book, Acts 8: 26-40

²⁶Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it."

RITUAL ACTION: Each story session will include a time to stop and recognize "holy ground" moments. One member of your group should pick up the flip flop and share a response: "How have you experienced "holy ground" this last week (or since our last gathering)? In relation to this story session share, **"How have you experienced God calling you, your ordinary self, to do something as the spirit gives you ability?" OR "Has God called you away from the group you usually travel with to "join" someone seeking support?"** (As a leader, you may choose to use the worksheet provided at the end of this study so youth can see the questions and write down their thoughts before sharing. These Holy Ground questions are re-worded and included in the top and bottom text boxes.)

RETURN TO THE STORY

³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For prophets say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

RITUAL ACTION: Questions

Leader: The Eunuch comes with his questions. God sends Philip to help the Eunuch to share his understanding. Do you think Philip had questions about where and why God was leading him along this road to this place and person? The word of God does not only come to us with answers but rather to stir up within us deep questions. What one question do you have after encountering this scripture text? It can be a question related to the text specifically, such as, “What is a eunuch?” Or “Why did God pick Philip for this job?” Or a question connecting the scripture to your life: “I don’t understand much of what scripture is saying, how can I help someone else understand?” Pass around the question mark giving everyone a chance to share a question. Then place the question mark on the altar saying:

Leader: We bring our questions to you God. Amen.

RETURN TO THE STORY:

³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Invite everyone to think back to the gathering game. As a leader, you may choose to use the worksheet provided with this lesson so that youth have these questions in print and have an opportunity to write responses before sharing. Worksheet questions for this section are in the middle of the worksheet.

Leader: In the game, a variety of voices may have distracted you from the voice trying to lead you along the right path. Obstacles got in the way of you successfully journeying across the room. In our text the Eunuch asks: “What is to prevent me from being baptized?” The Eunuch saw nothing to keep him from living into the fullness of God’s grace right in that moment, in that place, with this person he had just met. It was that important.

What prevents you from living into the fullness of God's grace? What prevents you from living into your baptism and daily living out your faith? (Are there voices that distract, obstacles that keep you from following where God might be leading?)

In our game, the other voices in the room and the obstacles made it difficult for the partner on the sideline to help support their blindfolded partner in making it across the room. Once they moved from the sideline to walk beside their partner, the task became less difficult. In our text, Philip moves to be next to the person God calls him to walk with. When the Eunuch asks to be baptized, Philip acts, baptizing him right then and there.

First, who walks beside you encouraging you to live into your baptism and live out your faith?

Secondly, who has God called you to walk alongside encouraging them in their faith? Are there places, moments, or people that make you hesitant to actively encourage someone else in their walk of faith?

Take time to share responses around your circle.

SENDING RITUAL ACTION:

Leader: Sometime we are the Eunuch, needing help and encouragement in our walk of faith. Sometimes we are Philip, called by God to come alongside someone else to encourage them and share the Good News of God's loving grace. Because of God's grace we are always children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and called as our ordinary selves to extraordinary lives of faith.

Have everyone find their partners from the game. Pass the water bottle around the pairs. Partners should bless each other by getting their fingers wet and "splashing" the other while saying the words "Nothing can prevent God from walking with you."

These "Story Kit" resources were developed for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, by Shivon Miller, Minister of Congregational Life at Trinity Lutheran Church in Duluth, MN. Permission is granted to use and reproduce for individual use within a congregational setting. For more resources:

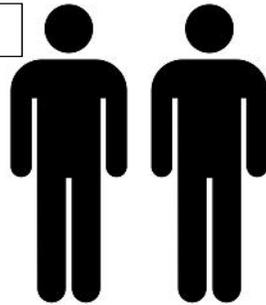
www.nemnsynod.org/sj-resources.

My Ordinary Talent:

My Ordinary Talent:

God has filled you with the Holy Spirit and given you unique gifts enabling you to share the Good News with others. God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Consider a time your ordinary gifts have been used to share God's extraordinary love:

YOU



Who walks with you, encouraging you in your faith?



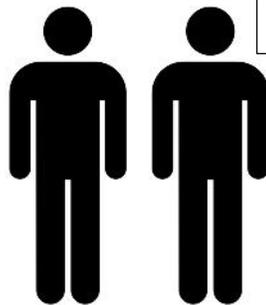
What obstacles keep you from living into the fullness of God's grace?



What makes you hesitant to encourage another in their walk of faith?



Who has God called you to walk alongside, to encourage in their walk of faith?



YOU

Describe where and how God is calling you away from the group you usually travel with to join someone "on a different road" to share support and encouragement?