

April 6/7, 2024

"Exclusion and Embrace"

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## **SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

### **2024 Challenge:** Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

**April:** Read Exodus to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## **Day 1** Acts 8:26-38 | Exclusion and Embrace

**So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.** Acts 8:27-28

Jesus's resurrection changes everything. Jesus declares that his gospel message of salvation is available for all people ([Matthew 28:18-19](#)). The Holy Spirit comes, and Jews from across the world hear and believe the gospel ([Acts 2](#)). The gospel begins to spread, but mainly among Jews. Throughout the book of Acts, God moves the disciples to share with not just Jews but also with those from different ethnicities, backgrounds and walks of life. The gospel proclaims that through faith in Jesus, there is equality and embrace of all people.

Throughout history, the church hasn't always understood that anyone can be included through faith in Jesus. We don't always get it right, either. We are prone to exclude or ignore certain people. Yet we, too, are called to share the same gospel message: that all have sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)) and can be saved through faith in Jesus ([Romans 10:9-10](#)). This week, remember God's heart for all people and our role in sharing that message with all.

**TODAY:** Pray and ask for God's help to see those around you who need to hear the gospel. Pray that he will open your eyes to his work and give you the courage to share the gospel with someone this week.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 9-10](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note God's protection for his people and how each plague defeats the enemy.

## **Day 2** Acts 8:26-38 | Philip's Obedience

**The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.** Acts 8:34-35

After Jesus's resurrection, he commands the disciples to take his message to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#)). However, their work initially remains in Jerusalem. On Pentecost, thousands believe, and the church begins ([Acts 2](#)). One day, the Holy Spirit gives Philip, one of Jesus's twelve apostles, a rather unusual command. He's to go down a desert road and approach a chariot. Philip doesn't hesitate and encounters an Ethiopian reading Scripture. Philip explains the gospel message, and the man believes. Through Philip's obedience, God demonstrates his incredible love for and inclusion of outsiders. This account records the first non-Jewish person to believe and be baptized.

God's command to share the gospel and make disciples of people from all backgrounds is for us today, too. Sharing the good news of Jesus with others is an act of obedience. Jesus hasn't left us alone in this work. He has promised to be with us always ([Matthew 28:20](#)) and that the Holy Spirit will empower us to be his witnesses ([Acts 1:8](#)).

**TODAY:** Are you comfortable with sharing your faith with others? Sometimes, it helps to have tools. Our Ada Bible Academy is offering a Sharing Your Faith with Confidence class starting April 25. Learn more and register [HERE](#).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Exodus 11-12](#).** Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the imagery in the Passover and how it points to what Jesus will do.

## Day 3 Luke 7:36-50 | Outsiders Welcome

**The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."** Luke 7:49-50

The Ethiopian eunuch's faith in Jesus is a huge step forward for the gospel. The Ethiopian is a foreigner and a eunuch, two traits that make him an outsider. He went to the temple in Jerusalem to worship but would have only been allowed in the outer court. Luke, who wrote Luke and Acts, makes it clear that Jesus's mission includes religious Jews *and* those considered outsiders. Jesus is even accused of being a friend of tax collectors and sinners, two outsider groups ([Luke 7:34](#)). Once, during a dinner, Jesus chastises his religious host and welcomes a woman who washes his feet with her tears, full of sorrow for her sin. He declares her sins forgiven and praises her faith.

It can be easy for us to look at people as outsiders or as too far gone for the gospel. But Jesus's message of forgiveness through faith in him is for all. He's come for the bitter family member, the alcoholic, the over-achiever, the skeptic, the rich, the poor, the adulterer, the legalist and the apathetic church-goer. We are all equally lost. We can all be equally forgiven through faith in Jesus.

**TODAY:** Prayerfully consider who you have labeled as an outsider or too far gone for the gospel to reach. Confess that to God and ask for his forgiveness. Ask him to help you see and love all people as he does—people Jesus died to save.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Exodus 13](#).** Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the consecration of the firstborn.

## Day 4 Isaiah 53 | Jesus in Isaiah

**He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.** Isaiah 53:7

After his resurrection, Jesus explains to his disciples that the law, prophets and Psalms (known as the Old Testament) point to him ([Luke 24:44](#)). The Ethiopian eunuch comes to faith by reading [Isaiah 53](#) and listening to Philip's explanation of the prophet's message about Jesus ([Acts 8:35](#)). In fact, Isaiah points to Jesus in so many ways that some scholars have even labeled it "the fifth gospel."

Studying and understanding the Old Testament is so valuable. Through the Holy Spirit's inspiration, the writers point to Jesus through people, events, imagery and symbols. [Isaiah 53](#) reveals what Jesus would suffer on the

cross as he is “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities” ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). Events like the Exodus, when Moses led people out of slavery in Egypt, provide a picture of the greater exodus Jesus offers: freedom from slavery to sin. The more we understand the Bible as one big story, with Jesus’s life, death and resurrection as the climax, the more our faith in him deepens, as well as our ability to share the gospel with others.

**TODAY:** Commit or re-commit to journeying with us this year as we look for Jesus in the Old Testament. Ask God to help you to love the Old Testament and open your eyes to how it points to him ([Luke 24:31](#)).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 14-15](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the crossing of the sea and consider how Jesus passes through the water in baptism.

## Day 5 Acts 8:36-39 | Baptism

**As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.** Acts 8:36-38

Philip explains the gospel, and the Ethiopian man believes. As they approach some water, the Ethiopian man asks Philip to baptize him. Belief moves him to respond with action. After his baptism, the man rejoices greatly. His story offers a beautiful picture of belief followed by obedience through baptism in response to Jesus’s command ([Matthew 28:19](#)).

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward change that occurs after we place our faith and trust in Christ. Lowering into the water symbolizes dying to our old life without God. Rising from the water symbolizes our new life in Christ. It is a picture of our transformation from chaos to life with God ([Romans 6:3-4](#) and [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). We are saved by grace through faith when we believe. Baptism demonstrates that cleansing in a real and meaningful way ([Ephesians 2:8](#) and [1 Peter 3:21](#)). We publicly declare our decision to make Jesus the leader of our life. We won’t be perfect but we seek to follow him in everything ([Galatians 3:27](#) and [John 14:15](#)).

**TODAY:** Join us in praying for baptisms happening May 4-5. If you’ve never been baptized and are following Jesus—we’d love to talk with you. Maybe you were baptized as a child before you decided to follow Jesus. We’d be honored to discuss the key differences between infant baptism and believer’s baptism. Start a conversation [HERE](#).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Exodus 16](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the provision of bread in the wilderness and consider how Jesus calls himself the Bread of Life and multiplies bread in the wilderness.