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**Next Week's Life Group:** 2 Chronicles 20:1-24

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**Our Church's Definition of a Biblical Disciple of Jesus**

A person who is committed to *following, being changed by,* and *being on mission* with Jesus (taken from Matthew 4:19).

**The Purpose of Life Groups**

Life Groups are where we connect and grow with God and with others through relationships; growing in spiritual maturity as biblical disciples of Jesus. Life Groups are loving, safe and interactive; a place where people can be authentic and vulnerable as they explore, experience, and grow in relationship with Jesus, the Word, and others to inspire a culture of discipleship as we do life together. *Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:23-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11*



## Facing Incredible Odds

*So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.*

Acts 8:30b-31a

**Getting Started:** If you could go back to junior high or high school and repeat just one class, which class would you choose? Why?

**Context:** After Pentecost, the church was centered in Jerusalem, but after the martyrdom of Stephen, most of the believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. The original 12 Apostles remained in Jerusalem with a faithful remnant. In this passage we see the Apostle Philip being directed by an angel to leave Jerusalem to travel toward Gaza through the desert. As he was going along, he encountered an Ethiopian dignitary who had been visiting Jerusalem to worship. Many Gentiles in the first century had grown weary of the multiple gods and loose morals of their nations and were searching in Judaism for the truth. This man was reading, apparently out loud, from the prophet Isaiah about a person who was led as a sheep or lamb to be sacrificed. The man asked Philip, “Who is the prophet talking about?” Philip told him about Jesus.

The New Testament writers often identified Jesus as being “the lamb”, or “the Lamb of God”. No doubt, the title “lamb of God” would be associated in the minds of the Jews with the Passover lamb, the lamb led to the slaughter in Isaiah’s prophecies (Isaiah 53:7), and the lambs used in the daily sacrifices of sin offerings (Leviticus 14:12, 21, 24; Numbers 6:12). In depicting Jesus as a lamb, the Scriptures were declaring that Jesus was the substitutionary sacrifice provided by God for our sins. Jesus, the Messiah, came to do what we could not do for ourselves---take away our sin.



**Story/Passage:** Acts 8:26-40—Christ is preached to an Ethiopian

## Marks of a Godly Ministry



### Head Level

These questions help us to examine what the Word tells us.

- What are some things the Ethiopian was doing in his pursuit of knowing more about God? (Optional: Do you think it was enough?)
- From what we read in this passage, how much information and time to think did the angel from the Lord give Philip when he sent him toward Gaza?
- How might the details in this passage show that God is especially interested in individuals? How do you know that God is interested in the details of your life?



### Heart Level

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- Why do you think we are given so much information about the social and political status of the Ethiopian? How do you think this could have influenced them in their brief roles as student and teacher?
- Does God always demand instant obedience or provide only vague instructions? Is waiting or praying for clarity an indication that you lack faith or that you are looking for a way out of fully obeying God’s leading? Explain.



### Hands Level

These questions help us commit to a next step and live it out in our everyday lives.

- Read Isaiah 53:3-6 (which the Ethiopian was reading) using “my” or “I” in place of “our” or “us” or “we”. Do you truly believe that Jesus was the person spoken of by Isaiah and do you believe He did this for *you* personally? Will you share why this is important to you?
- Where is God asking you to follow Him in confidence and faith, but with less information than you would like? How can the group be praying for you as you consider your decision?