Open Bible Stories

Stephen and Philip

## 0 Introduction

### 0.1 Key Idea

The story of Stephen and Philip teaches us how the gospel spreads through martyrdom and the work of the Holy Spirit.

### 0.2 Creedal Verse

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32-33.

### 0.3 Metanarrative Summary

The eternal God created all things in six days. He made a good and perfect world. He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation. But humans rebelled against God and ruined God’s creation. God set to restore his world through his promise. God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham. God kept his promises across the generations. God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac. God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau. God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation. God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, and used him to rescue his family. God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves. But, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from their slavery. God judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land. God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people. God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan. God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies. God formed Israel into a kingdom. He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that would rule his people forever. Many of Israel’s kings were evil and the kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms. God sent prophets to warn his people of God’s judgment and call them to repent. When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile. After many years, he brought them back to the land. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people form their sin. After many years, the prophet John was born. He would prepare people for the coming Messiah. At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary. When John and Jesus grew up, John baptized Jesus as a sign that Jesus was God’s beloved Son. Jesus endured all manner of temptation without ever sinning. When he was thirty years old, he launched a public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. He taught his disciples about the life of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness. He performed many miracles: he fed a crowd of five thousand, he walked on water, he healed the sick, and he cast out demons. He proclaimed to people the nature of real faith, God’s kingdom, and the how fallen humans can be restored in relationship with God. Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus revealed his power and glory to his disciples and raised a dead man to life Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples and put on trial before a Roman governor Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified on a cross Three days later, Jesus rose again from the dead. After meeting with many of his disciples, Jesus went back to heaven. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’ followers and formed them into his church Jesus’ disciples, like Peter and John, performed miracles and preached the good news about Jesus. New leaders like Stephen and Philip served the church and preached about Jesus

## 1 Biblical Interpretation: Observing the Details of the Story

After reading the crafted biblical story, answer the following questions to familiarize yourself with the details of the story.

### 1.1 Observation Questions

#### 45-01

What was the name the key Christian leader at the beginning of this story?

What do we learn about Stephen?

How did many people respond to Stephen’s teaching?

#### 45-02

How did some of the Jews who did not believe in Jesus respond to Stephen’s teaching?

What was the false charge that some Jews brought against Stephen?

What did the religious leaders do to Stephen?

Who else came to testify against Stephen?

#### 45-03

What did the high priest ask Stephen?

How did Stephen respond to the high priest?

What did Stephen say about the people?

What did Stephen say the people had done that was worse than their ancestors?

#### 45-04

How did the religious leaders respond to Stephen’s rebuke?

How did the religious leaders react to Stephen’s accusation?

#### 45-05

What did Stephen say as he was dying?

What was the last thing Stephen said before he died?

#### 45-06

What happened to the believers on the day Stephen was killed?

What did the believers do when the persecution began in Jerusalem?

Did the believers stop preaching about Jesus?

#### 45-07

What Christian leader ministered in Samaria?

How did people respond to Philip’s preaching?

What did an angel tell Philip to do?

Who did Philip meet on the road in the wilderness?

What did the Holy Spirit tell Philip?

#### 45-08

What was the Ethiopian official doing as Philip approached?

What did the portion of Isaiah say?

#### 45-09

What question did Philip ask the Ethiopian official?

Did the official understand the prophecy that he was reading?

What did Ethiopian official invite Philip to do?

#### 45-10

Did Philip accept the invitation of the Ethiopian official?

Who did Philip say Isaiah had written about?

What else did Philip explain to the Ethiopian official?

#### 45-11

After Philip explained the prophecy and they came to some water, what did the Ethiopian ask Philip?

#### 45-12

What did Philip and the Ethiopian do after the driver stopped the chariot?

What happened to Philip after he baptized the Ethiopian official?

What did Philip continue to do after he was taken away?

#### 45-13

What did the Ethiopian official do after Philip left him?

### 1.2 Translation Questions

Use the following translation questions to understand specific details of the passage. Discuss how you might translate these specific elements of the story.

#### 45-01

**The Holy Spirit gave him much power and wisdom** The Holy Spirit enabled Stephen to do powerful things, such as miracles. Also, the Holy Spirit gave Stephen understanding and discernment. How would you express **The Holy Spirit gave him much power and wisdom** to mean the Holy Spirit gave Stephen the ability to do miracles and gave him understanding?

  

**Many people believed him when he taught them to trust in Jesus** Stephen taught people about Jesus. During these times of teaching, many people believed his message about Jesus and they put their trust in Jesus. How would you express **Many people believed him when he taught them to trust in Jesus** to mean many people trusted Jesus as a result of Stephen’s teaching?

  

#### 45-02

**so they went to the religious leaders and told lies about him** Some Jews argued with Stephen and became very angry with Stephen and what he was teaching. The result of their anger was to say things that were not true about Stephen. How would you express **so they went to the religious leaders and told lies about him** to mean the result of the Jews becoming angry with Stephen was they said false things about him to the religious leaders?

  

**We heard Stephen speak evil things about Moses and God!** The Jews who were angry with Stephen told the religious leaders that Stephen said wicked things about Moses and God. This was not true. Stephen did not say these things. The Jews gave this false report to try to harm Stephen The Jews expressed how angry they were with Stephen, and to try to make the other people angry with him as well. How would you express **We heard Stephen speak evil things about Moses and God!** as a strong statement that accused Stephen of saying disrespectful and wicked things about Moses and God?

  

#### 45-03

**You always reject the Holy Spirit!** Stephen rebuked the people who were accusing him. He accused them of never obeying the Holy Spirit. How would you express **You always reject the Holy Spirit!** to mean the people continually refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit?

  

**just as our ancestors always rejected God and always killed his prophets** Stephen said that the people accusing him were behaving just like the Jewish people who lived a long time ago. The Jews who lived a long time ago turned away from God and murdered God’s messengers. Stephen’s accusers were acting in a similar way by continually refusing to listen to the Holy Spirit. How would you express **just as our ancestors always rejected God and always killed his prophets** to mean Stephen’s accusers were acting in the same way the Jews did who lived a long time ago when they continually refused to listen to God and continually murdered his messengers?

  

**But you did something worse than they did!** You killed the Messiah! Stephen made a strong statement to accuse the Jews of murdering the Messiah whom God had sent to them. The act of murdering the Messiah was far worse than what the Jews did who lived a long time ago. How would you express **But you did something worse than they did!** You killed the Messiah! as strong statements that accuse the people of doing something more evil than the ancient Israelites when they crucified the Messiah?

  

#### 45-04

**covered their ears** The religious leaders were very angry at Stephen’s rebuke. They placed their hands over their ears as a symbolic action to show that they did not want to hear what Stephen said. How would you express **covered their ears** to mean they put their hands over their ears to show that they disliked what Stephen said and did not want to hear it any more?

  

**yelled loudly** The religious leaders made very loud sounds with their voices. They were very upset and shouted in anger. How would you express **yelled loudly** to mean the religious leaders were very angry and made very loud sounds with their voices to show their anger?

  

**They dragged Stephen out of the city** The people used force to take Stephen outside the main part of the city. How would you express **They dragged Stephen out of the city** to mean forcefully brought Stephen outside the city against his will?

  

#### 45-05

**As Stephen was dying, he cried out** The people were throwing stones at Stephen to kill him. Stephen was almost dead. At this point in time, Stephen spoke very loudly. How would you express **As Stephen was dying, he cried out** to mean just before Stephen died he called out in a loud voice?

  

**Jesus, receive my spirit** Stephen was almost dead. Soon, his physical body would no longer be alive. Stephen politely asked Jesus to take his spirit. How would you express **Jesus, receive my spirit** as a polite request for Jesus take his Stephen’s spirit and keep it alive and safe?

  

**He fell to his knees** Stephen lowered himself down on his knees. This was an act of humble submission to God. How would you express **He fell to his knees** to mean Stephen knelt down and brought his body in a lowly and humble position that showed honor and submission to God?

  

**do not hold this sin against them** Stephen knew that the people were sinning by killing him. Stephen did not want God to punish them for their sin. Stephen was asking God to forgiven them for killing him. How would you express **do not hold this sin against them** to mean do not consider them guilty of the sin of killing me and forgive their sin?

  

#### 45-06

**That day many people in Jerusalem started persecuting the followers of Jesus** People were mistreating and violently oppressing believers of Jesus. This started on the day Stephen was killed. How would you express **That day many people in Jerusalem started persecuting the followers of Jesus** to mean people who lived in Jerusalem began oppressing and mistreating believers of Jesus on the same day Stephen was killed?

  

**so the believers fled to other places** The believers moved to live in other locations. The reason they did this was because people were persecuting followers of Jesus. How would you express **so the believers fled to other places** to mean the result of people persecuting believers of Jesus was followers of Jesus scattered and moved to live in other places?

  

**But in spite of opposition** The Jewish leaders thought they could stop the spread of Jesus’ teaching by persecuting his followers. Instead, this caused them to scatter and spread the message even more widely. How would you express **But in spite of opposition** to mean the believers continued to preached Jesus even though one would expect them to stop preaching because of the opposition and persecution they were experiencing?

  

#### 45-07

**an angel came from God to Philip and told him to go into the wilderness** God sent an angel to deliver a message to Philip. The angel instructed Philip to go into a desert-like area where few people live. How would you express **an angel came from God to Philip and told him to go into the wilderness** to mean God sent a heavenly messenger to Philip and he instructed Philip to go into a remote place where not many people live?

  

**This man was an important official from the land of Ethiopia** This man was from Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a country in Eastern Africa. The man had high status as a worker for the Ethiopian government. How would you express **This man was an important official from the land of Ethiopia** to mean the man riding in the chariot was a high ranking government worker for the Ethiopian government?

  

#### 45-08

**They led him like a lamb to be killed** This passage refers to the Messiah. The Messiah is compared to a lamb. The passage predicts that the Messiah will die and his death will take place like people leading a lamb to be slaughtered. How would you express **They led him like a lamb to be killed** to mean people would kill the Messiah in a way that is similar to people leading a lamb to be slaughtered?

  

**as a lamb is silent** This passage refers to the Messiah. It predicts that the Messiah will be killed. His death is compared to someone leading a lamb to be slaughtered. The lamb will die without making a sound. People will kill the Messiah and the Messiah will not make sound to resist his death. How would you express **as a lamb is silent** to mean like a lamb that does not make any sound even when it is about to be killed?

  

#### 45-09

**Do you understand what you are reading?** The Ethiopian was intelligent and could read, but he lacked spiritual discernment. How would you express **Do you understand what you are reading?** as a question that asks if you understand the meaning of what you are reading?

  

**Please come and sit next to me** It is implied here that Philip agreed to travel down the road with him to explain the scriptures. The Ethiopian official invited Philip to sit next to him in his chariot. How would you express **Please come and sit next to me** as a polite invitation that requests Philip to get aboard the chariot and sit next to the Ethiopian official?

  

#### 45-10

**In this way, he told the man the good news about Jesus** Philip explained to the Ethiopian official that the passage in Isaiah was referring to the Messiah, Jesus. He also explained other passages of Scripture and used these passages to share the good news about Jesus. How would you express **In this way, he told the man the good news about Jesus** to mean Philip taught passages in the Old Testament Scripture to share the good news about Jesus saving people from their sin?

  

#### 45-11

**some water** There was enough water that Philip and the Ethiopian official could get into it and put the official under the water. Perhaps the water was like a pond, lake, or stream. How would you express **some water** to mean a body of water large enough for the two men to get into the water and for Philip to baptize the Ethiopian official in the water?

  

**May I be baptized?** The Ethiopian official asked Philip to baptize him. He wanted to be baptized and asked this question to clarify that there was not reason the prevented Philip from baptizing him. How would you express **May I be baptized?** as a question that asks Philip to baptize him?

  

#### 45-12

**the Holy Spirit suddenly carried Philip away to another place** The Holy Spirit immediately took Philip away from that place and brought him to a different location. This happened instantly and in a moment. How would you express **the Holy Spirit suddenly carried Philip away to another place** to mean the Holy Spirit instantly snatched Philip away and brought him to a different location?

  

**There Philip continued to tell people about Jesus** When Philip arrived in the different location, he preached the gospel to the people who lived there. How would you express **There Philip continued to tell people about Jesus** to mean Philip continued to preached in the place the Sprit brought him that Jesus can save people from their sins?

  

#### 45-13

**He was happy that he now knew Jesus** The Ethiopian official traveled back to his country of Ethiopia and was very happy that he was saved from his sin because he had believed in Jesus. How would you express **He was happy that he now knew Jesus** to mean Ethiopian official was experiencing strong feelings of joy because he believed in Jesus and had his sins forgiven?

  

## 2 Theological Dialogue: Discussing the Meaning of the Story

Take time to explore the meaning of this story together as a community. Use the following discussions as a way to grasp what truth the story teaches.

### 2.1 Discourse Questions

##### What was the ministry of Stephen and Philip like? (45-01, 45-02, 45-04, 45-07)

##### What was the message of the gospel that Stephen and Philip preached? (45-01, 45-03, 45-08, 45-09, 45-10, 45-11, 45-13)

##### What different kinds of responses did people have to good news about Jesus? (45-01, 45-02, 45-03, 45-04, 45-05, 45-06, 45-07, 45-11, 45-12, 45-13)

##### How did the good news of Jesus spread so that many people came to believe in Jesus? (45-01, 45-02, 45-05, 45-06, 45-07, 45-12)

### 2.2 Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. What are core elements of the gospel? What aspects of the gospel were evident in this story of the ministry of Stephen and Philip?
2. How do people variously respond to the gospel? How does this story show different reactions to the gospel?
3. How does God bring about the spread of the gospel? What does this story teach about how God caused the gospel spread and more people to come to believe in Jesus?

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## 3 Personal Reflection: Following the Teaching of the Story

Take a moment to allow this story to evaluate your own life and to consider how God would have you respond. After this reflection, use the quality checking questions to check your translation draft among the translation team.

### 3.1 Journal Reflection

Prayerfully think about the following personal reflection questions. Write/Record your answers and/or discuss them as a group.

1. How has this story continued to solidify your belief in the gospel?
2. What kind of persecution and mistreatment have you experienced because of your faith in Jesus?
3. How has God arranged circumstances for you to share the gospel with others?
4. How can you be alert and watchful for God’s leading to share the gospel with others?

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