



HomeGroup **LEADER'S** Discussion Questions

Week 1

THESE QUESTIONS ARE A GUIDE INTENDED TO HELP YOUR DISCUSSION, BUT YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO USE THEM. WE DO NOT RECOMMEND TRYING TO COVER ALL THE QUESTIONS. FOR MOST GROUPS, CHOOSE 1 FROM EACH SECTION THAT YOU FIND MOST HELPFUL.

This is a suggested introduction that you can use to transition into the discussion. This week's intro is meant to help reintroduce the "Knew Normal" series. You can choose to skip it, summarize it, or read it verbatim in your discussion.

We thought we knew what normal was. It was predictable. It was familiar...but then life happened! School went online. We lost our job. A loved one got sick. The season was cancelled. Toilet paper became a scarce resource. *Social distancing* became an everyday expression. Who would have guessed that a virus would unleash these kinds of disruptions?! We all know what it's like when *our new normal is not what we knew before*.

As we launch HomeGroups, we're acknowledging how abnormal this season is. Some things haven't changed, though. The Church has always been about the people of God rather than a building or a street address. That is unchanged today. The Church has always gathered for Word-centered worship of God. That too is unchanged. Our circumstances may shift, but the unchanging Spirit of God is always at work to advance the unstoppable mission of God. We're reminded of this as we open back up to the pages of Acts.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 8:26-40 and Isaiah 53 You can choose to read from Isaiah 53, but no question is directly related to the full chapter. Tom read a portion of the chapter during the sermon and verses 7-8 are quoted in our passage out of Acts.

CONNECT

You may want to pick only one of these two "icebreaker" questions. New groups may want to use both and spend more time in this section in order to get to know each other better.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being no change and 10 being epic change), how different is your life now from what it was before COVID struck? Give one example to illustrate.

For the sake of time, we encourage you to limit this to one example per person! Be mindful of the potential for people to have very different answers, including examples of difficult experiences they've been through.

2. What's one change due to COVID that has been positive for you?

LEARN

3. Read the passage from Acts. Where do we see God directing the circumstances to bring about Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch?

Examples might include (1) the angel of the Lord calling Philip in v. 26, (2) the Spirit telling Philip to approach the chariot in v. 29, (3) the specific passage that the eunuch was reading from Isaiah, (4) the route that took them by water so he could be baptized, and (5) Philip's relocation by the Spirit's power in vv. 39-40.

4. Eunuchs were restricted in their worship of God and this eunuch belonged to a foreign land well outside Israel. We might think he was disqualified from knowing God, but what does this passage demonstrate about the scope of God's salvation?

You can refer to Deuteronomy 23:1 (it's explicit) for more background! The scope of God's salvation is unlimited. Ancient Ethiopia was also known as the land of Cush. Passages, such as Isaiah 11:11; 56:3-8; and Psalm 68:31 speak of a future movement of God among the people of Cush and of unlimited acceptance of eunuchs. This passage can be seen as an initial fulfillment of these OT promises.

5. It's not surprising that a foreigner from far away would have questions about the Book of Isaiah! How is the eunuch's confusion and curiosity an opportunity for Philip to explain the gospel?

As Pastor Tom describes, the eunuch is searching or seeking, which gives Philip an open door to listen and then answer the eunuch's questions.

6. Where in the passage do we see Philip exhibit faith in God in spite of uncertainty about the outcome?

Philip obeys God at each step of the way even though he had no idea what God was going to do next. He "rose and went" in v. 27. He "ran to him" in v. 30. Every step of obedience was fruitful.

APPLY

7. COVID may be making life feel unpredictable or even out-of-control. What can we learn from Philip's example of trusting God and obeying even when the outcome was difficult to predict?

What would it look like for you for you to display that same kind of trust and obedience?

8. Philip was ready to share the gospel message by first explaining the meaning of Isaiah 53:7-8. How confident are you in being able to answer others' questions about God's Word? What can you do to become better prepared?

9. God was actively at work behind the scenes in both the Ethiopian eunuch's life and in Philip's "over here" to bring about the eunuch's salvation as he travelled back "over there" to his foreign land.

How do you think God might be at work "over here" in this season for a purpose that extends "over there" after this season ends and we're back together?

Tom uses the language of "over here" and "over there" in the sermon. Even though it sounds like it's referring to a location, we also are applying it to time. "Over here" can mean the present, while "over there" is a reference to the future. What is God doing in this present season that might have a purpose that outlasts this season? Since none of us knows for certain, use your imagination to think of what purpose God might have for us during this time of HomeGroups.

As one idea, Tom mentioned the often-quoted phrase near the start of the sermon that we grow in "circles, not rows." This could be a season where we are going to grow more deeply in smaller community as we meet in homes.

10. What else stood out to you about the sermon? Was something especially significant, inspiring, confusing, or challenging?