

Philip Baptizes an Ethiopian Official in Private
About 5 minutes, from Acts 8: 26-40

Participants (*No need to memorize lines; the aim is to relive sacred events, not to perform*)

Philip

Ethiopian

Mrs. Pettyrules

Prompter Shout a brief line and Echoes repeat it.

Echoes Children and all adults who want to take part. Echoes need no script.

PART 1. Philip and the Ethiopian

Philip I'm Philip, one of the first seven deacons in Jerusalem.
I wonder why God's angel sent me out here to this deserted place.
Oh! Here comes an Ethiopian official in his chariot!

Prompter & Echoes Whoa, horse!

Philip Sir, you are reading Isaiah. Do you understand it?

Ethiopian No, I don't. I need a guide. Come sit with me.
To whom is this referring where it says,
"He was led as a sheep to slaughter;
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent."
Does it mean Isaiah who wrote it, or someone else?

Prompter & Echoes Who was this slain lamb?

Philip I explain about Jesus as we ride along.
The prophet Isaiah had foretold Jesus' sufferings as the Lamb of God.

Ethiopian Philip, look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?

Philip If you believe with all your heart, you may, sir.

Ethiopian I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Prompter & Echoes Whoa, horse!

Philip We both go down into the water, and I baptize him.
Then, the Spirit of God snatches me away,
and the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing.

Prompter & Echoes He is so happy!

PART 2. Philip and the Ethiopian in a Modern Setting

Philip An Ethiopian is driving Mrs. Pettyrules and me in his taxi to a meeting,
and we tell him about Jesus.

Ethiopian I believe now, with my whole heart.
What prevents me from being baptized?

Mrs. Pettyrules I saw a wine bottle in your door pocket, sir.
You have a drinking problem.
You must overcome your vice before our church baptizes you.
Our elders will prepare you first, to become a well-informed member.
My fine church is the one with the highest steeple in the city.

Ethiopian Please, Philip, baptize me now.
I need God urgently, and I will help my friends know Jesus.
They need Christ, too; we have all sinned lot!

Philip Jesus and his apostles taught that baptism is for bad people,
so you qualify!

Ethiopian Oh, then there is hope for my friends and me!

Prompter & Echoes Let God's grace flow freely!

Mrs. Pettyrules Philip, you are rushing things.
He is too new in the faith to baptize; it is a sacred ceremony,
only for those who merit it.

Philip Mrs. Pettyrules, the apostles' baptism is for bad people who repent.
No one merits God's grace!
The apostles baptized sinners without delay;
they let God's grace slop over on the unworthy!
I will baptize our new brother right away.

Mrs. Pettyrules But how can you be sure he is saved?
Mr. Ethiopian, you can't be baptized until you've quit drinking.
We must wait at least a year; then if you don't fall, we'll consider it.

Philip Oh no! Must he walk on the water before being baptized in it?

Ethiopian Ma'am, you discourage me.

Prompter & Echoes Disheartening!

Mrs. Pettyrules God's grace comes in a tiny bottle; we must dole it out sparingly.

Philip Mrs. Pettyrules, you doubt that this brother is saved.
Such doubts are contagious and extremely destructive.

Prompter & Echoes A stumbling block!

Philip Baptism is for newborn babes in Christ, not for the mature.
You would not wait for a baby to stop soiling its diapers
to bring it into your home. Our new brother is a baby in Christ,
and he needs other believer's loving acceptance.

Mrs. Pettyrules But what if we baptize this Ethiopian, and then he gets drunk?

Philip Then he would be a drunken Evangelical.

Mrs. Petty rules Oh my!

Philip Let me explain.
He will receive correction in the right way, in the church body
with accountability and loving pastoral care;
he will welcome our correction, and not fall away from the faith.

Prompter & Echoes Amen!

Philip However, if we deny baptism and leave him outside the body
to dry-clean himself in order to be baptized,
then he is sure to wander away after he stumbles.
We would probably never see our friend again!
All new believers stumble in some way.

Mrs. Pettyrules You've given me something to think about, Philip.
I might reconsider.

Philip Let us hold the newborn spiritual babies close!
I stumbled after I was baptized,
but I knew that God had forgiven me when the church forgave me.

Prompter & Echoes Blessed forgiveness!

Philip My brothers in the church body picked me up and carried me along.
God used their love and baptism to help me and my family
overcome our sinful habits.

Prompter & Echoes God's grace reassures us!