

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 6 – Empowered Beyond Our Boundaries

Acts 8:26–40

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit continually leads believers beyond fear, assumptions, comfort, and limited understandings of who belongs within the reach of God’s grace.

Participants will examine the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch and reflect on how the Holy Spirit:

- interrupts routines,
- stretches believers beyond familiarity,
- and calls the Church toward deeper attentiveness, humility, and openness.

The goal of this session is not political debate or ideological discussion.

Instead, participants should begin recognizing that Spirit-led living requires:

- listening,
- discernment,
- humility,
- compassion,
- and willingness to move toward people rather than away from them.

This session also helps participants explore how the Holy Spirit continually expands the Church’s understanding of mission, welcome, and faithful presence in the world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand how the Holy Spirit leads believers beyond comfort and familiarity
- Reflect on assumptions and boundaries that shape relationships
- Recognize the importance of listening and attentiveness in Spirit-led living
- Explore how the Holy Spirit expands the Church’s understanding of belonging
- Understand that faithful witness often begins with humility and presence

- Identify ways fear or assumptions can limit compassion and mission
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 8:26–40

Supporting Passages:

- Isaiah 56:3–8
 - Galatians 3:28
 - Ephesians 2:13–19
 - James 1:19
 - Romans 15:7
 - Colossians 4:5–6
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on group size and discussion depth.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
 - Participant Study Guide
 - Pen or journal
 - Comfortable discussion environment
 - Optional whiteboard or notepad for themes
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FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 8:26–40 slowly several times
- Reflect honestly on moments where God stretched your assumptions or comfort zones
- Prepare for participants carrying:

- church hurt
- fear of rejection
- discomfort around difference
- strong personal experiences regarding belonging or exclusion
- or uncertainty about difficult conversations in the Church

Important:

This session should NOT become:

- political debate,
- ideological argument,
- or emotionally reactive discussion.

The focus is:

- attentiveness,
- humility,
- Spirit-led listening,
- and compassionate faithfulness.

The goal is helping participants recognize that the Holy Spirit often works beyond the boundaries people naturally create.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit forms believers through honesty and transformation. This week we explore how the Holy Spirit stretches believers beyond comfort, assumptions, and familiar boundaries.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- humility
- openness

- wisdom
 - compassion
 - and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit.
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2. OPENING REFLECTION: BOUNDARIES & ASSUMPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Invite thoughtful and gentle discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do human beings naturally create boundaries and categories?
- What kinds of assumptions shape how people view others?
- Why do unfamiliar people or situations sometimes create discomfort?
- What makes listening difficult?

Facilitator Guidance:

Keep the tone reflective and non-combative.

Avoid:

- culture-war discussion,
- political argument,
- or forcing personal disclosure.

The goal is helping participants think honestly about human tendencies toward fear, comfort, and assumption.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 8:26–40 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- how the Holy Spirit leads Philip
- how Philip responds
- and what changes throughout the encounter.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this story stands out most strongly to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT OFTEN INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit frequently leads believers in unexpected and inconvenient directions.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 8:26
- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Romans 8:14

Key Truths:

- Philip leaves fruitful ministry to go into the desert
- The Spirit often leads one step at a time
- Spirit-led living requires attentiveness and responsiveness

Key Emphasis:

The Holy Spirit often works through interruptions, inconveniences, and unexpected opportunities.

Facilitator Insight:

Many people want God’s guidance to feel:

- fully explained,
- emotionally comfortable,
- and completely predictable.

Acts presents something more relational and dependent.

Discussion Questions:

- Why are interruptions often frustrating?
- How does modern busyness affect spiritual attentiveness?
- What helps people become more responsive to God’s leading?

5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS BELIEVERS TOWARD PEOPLE THEY MIGHT OVERLOOK (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit continually moves believers toward people beyond familiar boundaries.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 8:27–28

- Galatians 3:28
- Ephesians 2:13–19

Key Truths:

- The Ethiopian eunuch occupied a socially complicated position
- The Spirit intentionally leads Philip toward him
- The Gospel continually crosses barriers and boundaries

Key Emphasis:

The Holy Spirit often challenges believers to move toward people they might otherwise overlook or misunderstand.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section requires emotional maturity and calm pacing.

Avoid:

- oversimplification,
- ideological argument,
- or forcing participants into artificial agreement.

The emphasis is:

- humility,
- attentiveness,
- and compassion.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people naturally gravitate toward familiarity?
- What assumptions can quietly shape churches or communities?
- Why does the Holy Spirit repeatedly move outward toward people?

6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES BELIEVERS TO LISTEN BEFORE SPEAKING (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Spirit-led witness begins with attentiveness and listening.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 8:29–35

- James 1:19
- Colossians 4:5–6

Key Truths:

- Philip begins with questions rather than assumptions
- Listening is part of faithful witness
- The Spirit often prepares people before believers arrive

Key Emphasis:

The Holy Spirit forms believers who:

- listen carefully,
- speak wisely,
- and engage others with humility.

Facilitator Insight:

Many Christians feel pressure to:

- have every answer,
- win arguments,
- or fix people quickly.

Acts models a slower, more attentive approach.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is listening often difficult?
- How does listening build trust and understanding?
- What is the difference between faithful witness and trying to control conversations?

7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUALLY EXPANDS THE CHURCH (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit continually moves the Church outward toward mission, welcome, and reconciliation.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 8:36–40
- Isaiah 56:3–8
- Romans 15:7

Key Truths:

- The Gospel continues expanding outward in Acts
- The Spirit repeatedly stretches the Church's understanding of belonging
- Fear pushes inward; the Holy Spirit pushes outward

Key Emphasis:

The Church does not lead the mission of God.

The Holy Spirit does.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section should remain:

- hopeful,
- thoughtful,
- and grounded in Scripture.

Avoid:

- vague universalism,
- fear-driven exclusion,
- or combative conversation.

The focus is Spirit-led humility and faithful openness.

Discussion Questions:

- Why does fear often make communities more closed?
- How can Christians remain both discerning and compassionate?
- What might Spirit-led welcome look like today?

8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit continually stretches believers beyond:

- fear,
- assumptions,
- comfort,
- and limited understandings of belonging.

Spirit-led living requires:

- humility,
- attentiveness,
- listening,
- discernment,
- and willingness to move where God leads.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit often works beyond the boundaries people naturally create.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

Where might the Holy Spirit be inviting you toward greater humility, attentiveness, or openness?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 8:26–40 daily
- Pay attention to quick assumptions or reactions
- Practice intentional listening in one conversation this week
- Pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me become more attentive to where You are already at work.”

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- humility
- compassion
- wisdom
- discernment
- and openness to the Holy Spirit’s leading

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to help participants remain attentive to people, responsive to the Spirit, and willing to move beyond fear or assumption.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

This session requires calm, grounded leadership.

Do not allow discussion to become:

- political,
- combative,
- or emotionally reactive.

The goal is not ideological conformity.

The goal is helping participants recognize:

- the Holy Spirit continually moves outward,
- faithful witness requires humility and listening,
- and Spirit-led living stretches believers beyond comfort and assumption.

If participants leave:

- more attentive,
- more thoughtful,
- and more open to listening, compassion, and Spirit-led growth,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the tone:

- reflective
- humble
- grounded
- and centered on Spirit-dependent living.

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