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## YOUTH RESOURCE

### Acts 8:26-40

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### Aim

Obedying God in all aspects of life helps to bring about his purpose for our lives.

### Preparation

Ask your group to sit and listen to the song 'I Will Wait' (Mumford and Sons).

Ask these questions:

- 🗣️ What do you think this song means in a Christian context?
- 🗣️ Do you feel that you often have to wait on God to answer your prayers? What does that feel like?
- 🗣️ Do you sometimes feel that God must get impatient with us while he waits for us?
- 🗣️ Do you sometimes get impatient with yourself when you realise that God's way was the best way after all and maybe we just needed to be obedient to him in the first place?

### Activity

*You may like to print off a few paragraphs from the internet that are in a different language, illustrating the difficulty in understanding what is written.*

**What you will need:** scrap paper, scissors and sticky tape for all

Give out a sheet of scrap paper to all in your group. Ask them to use scissors to cut their pieces of paper into three pieces. Now without explanation, ask them to stick them back together again with tape or glue.

- ◆ Did that seem fairly pointless task?

It may have felt like it! Although... you did do what was asked of you! Now, ask them to join their individual pieces of paper to make one large one.

Your individual piece of paper was cut into three and then joined together to enable a bigger surface/ area to be used...

Our obedience to God means that what we seem to be doing sometimes makes no sense at all, but by being obedient to him, especially when we sometimes can't see his purpose for us, he often enables something bigger to happen.

### Read

📖 **Acts 8:26-40 NLT, 'Philip and the Ethiopian'.**

*(Use this time to read together slowly and thoughtfully, allowing space to write down first thoughts/ questions).*

### Key verses

'As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south..." (v26) and: 'Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?"' (vv30,31)

## Chat

*(Depending on the experience of the group, you may like to draw from some experience within the rest of the corps setting. Perhaps there are older people who it may be appropriate to ask to join this session, especially if those people have had instances where God has honoured their obedience to him.)*

- 🗨️ Do you have a plan for your life? What is it? Would you be willing to change your plans if God asks you to?
- 🗨️ Before this account that we've just read, Philip was having a pretty good time. He'd been successful with drawing crowds in Samaria (vv5-8) but he left that because God told him to go. Have you ever found anything hard about leaving somewhere you've wanted to stay when maybe God had a bigger picture plan for your life? Think about people in the church fellowship for whom that may be true too.
- 🗨️ Philip obeyed God and this meant that Ethiopia was opened up to the gospel. You could say that Philip's relatively 'small' step of obedience led to a 'big' opportunity. Has anything 'big' opened up for you because of doing something that seemed fairly small?
- 🗨️ The Ethiopian asked Philip to explain a passage of the Bible that he didn't understand. When we have trouble understanding the Bible, what are some of the ways we can get help?
  - ▶ Asking other people to help us.
  - ▶ Trying a different translation of the Bible. Encourage each other to discuss different versions that everyone uses and mention various apps like 'Pray as You Go' that may be beneficial to some.
  - ▶ Encourage young people to chat to older people or other friends outside of the group about what they do when they can't understand a particular part of the Bible. Ask them what steps they take.
  - ▶ The Ethiopian came to know God because he had part of the Old Testament explained to him. Do you enjoy reading the Old Testament? Which part of the Bible has God used to speak to you? Maybe you know of someone who had that experience?
- 🗨️ Why do you think Philip was suddenly and miraculously transported (almost like Dr Who...) to a different city? Did it show the urgency that was needed for others to find out who Jesus is?
- 🗨️ What does obedience to God look like for us?
  - ▶ Has God asked you to do something in particular? Are you fearful of that thing?
  - ▶ Does it mean sharing the good news of Jesus in a particular way/role?
- 🗨️ The Ethiopian wanted to do something straight away in his response to now knowing Jesus. He wasted no time in becoming baptised. Have there been times when you have wanted to react immediately to Jesus? Has anything helped you? Has anything stopped you?

## Response

Quite often we may not understand God's plans (think of Philip who pretty much got a 'demotion'), but the end results will prove that God's way is right.

What makes it difficult for us to trust God when it seems that we can't see the bigger picture or when we feel him telling us to do something that makes no sense?

Bear in mind that neither Philip nor the Ethiopian eunuch understood what was happening: Philip didn't understand why God told him to go somewhere else and the Ethiopian didn't understand what it was that he was reading in the Bible. Are there things in your life that you don't understand right now?

Think about those things for a moment.

'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' (vv30-31).

Think about how you might be able to be that person who helps to explain words of Jesus to others.

## Creative response

Using the now large sheet of paper, spend some time (maybe using the Mumford track again) thinking about your week ahead... asking God to send someone your way who may need God 'interpreted' or explained to them by actions or by words. Write, draw or paint on the now big piece of paper (agree how you are going to use the big piece of paper beforehand) so that it serves as a reminder that our small obedient steps can lead to a bigger and purpose-filled picture. Our steps of obedience can lead to something big!

Perhaps spend some time reflecting on the words the eunuch most likely read from Isaiah 53:7-8 or 56:3-5. What are the steps you would take to understand those words? Take some time to ask God together for wisdom in how you may go about sharing the living word of God this week, by word and by action. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit individually and collectively and pray for each other.

## To close

Pray over those gathered in your group: 'Trust in the Lord completely, and do not rely on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you, and he will lead you in every decision you make' (Proverbs 3:5 *The Passion Translation*).