

## Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. "The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I?" he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb  
before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak  
of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

### **"When Water Is Thicker Than Blood"**

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord  
suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again,  
but went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8: 39

It's Mother's Day, our society's day for honoring our mothers. It's our deeply human day for naval gazing and recalling our dependent

connection on a life source other than our own. It's our childhood day for giving thanks for familial genes and motherly care which shapes the essence of who we are. It's love's day of belonging and for celebrating whose we are.

Nine years ago I received a poem from one of my daughters that she wrote for a women's literature class in college. Every mother's day I re-read it in order to feel happy about the renewal she receives through her connection with me.

### **To My Dear and Loving Mother**

I remember as a little girl, late at night I cried for you.  
Fever raging and head pounding, nothing seems to take the pain away.  
I cry your name one more time, pleading for you to help.  
Finally my cries are heard and you appear,  
with the touch of your hand all the pains are gone.  
In the third grade I wanted to play, basketball was a boys' sport.  
They squeezed me in on a team, I looked around and felt no courage.  
I was the only girl on the team, no boys wanted a girl on their team.  
I went home feeling beaten and useless, looking for you to cheer me up.  
That day you taught me about being assertive,  
no more did I whine about being the only girl.  
As my teenage years began, I no longer looked for you.  
My friends began to take your place, I now had a new shoulder to cry on.  
No longer on your level of thinking, I wandered off track for several years.  
My problems now seemed too big, for you to take the fears away.  
I recall many times in high school,  
my thoughts and body were contaminated.  
As I would pop another pill I saw your face, sad and worried is the  
vision I saw.  
I would shake the vision from my mind, and lose a few more years.  
Tired and weary, my first year of college was over.  
Going nowhere, doing nothing, I went home for the weekend.  
You welcomed me with open arms, forgetting all the hurt I've caused.  
You cooked my favorite dinner, and sat down to say, "How have you  
been?"  
I come to my present state of mind, where my visions are no longer gray.  
I'm going somewhere and doing things, only on the strength you gave me.

You showed me how to be strong, you showed me how to believe in myself  
Whenever I feel scared or blue once again, I call you to take the fear away.

Eighteen years ago I read a humorous excerpt from Richard Lavoie's commencement speech to graduates of the Riverview School in Cape Cod Massachusetts. The excerpt is composed of important character traits, personal values, and loving practices that the students had learned in their families of origin. It emphasizes the need to periodically take a refresher course from one's mother in order to abide in them. Every Mother's Day I re-read the list to remind me about the way in which I have and continue to help my children develop and grow into loving human beings.

### How To Live A Sensible Life

Compliment three people each day. Return what you borrow. Donate blood. Keep secrets. **Call your mother.** Always buy lemonade from any kid selling it in her driveway. Vote. Don't smoke. **Call your mother.** Let people pull in front of you in traffic. Lend only the books you never care to see again. **Call your mother.** Try mustard on French fries. Learn CPR. Use seat belts. Just say no to drugs but also to racism, sexism, and hate. **Call your mother.** Let people know what you stand for---and what you won't stand for. Be a good loser. Be a good winner. **Call your mother.** Don't shop for groceries when you're hungry. Never judge a day until the evening. Praise in public/criticize in private. Wave to children on school buses. **Call your mother.** Shower the people you love with love. Always buy gas from the neighborhood gas station. Remember, the secret to a good marriage is to find the right person and be the right person. **Call your mother.** If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. When you have kids---read to them, talk to them, sing to them, but most importantly, listen to them. Be somebody's hero. **Call your mother.** Never discuss money with anyone who has much more or much less than you do. Refill empty ice cube trays. **Call your mother.** Be loyal. Be aware of priorities---no one ever said on his deathbed, "Gee I wish I had spent more time at the office." Watch the sunrise once a year. **Call your mother.** Remember---the best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother (and vice versa). Have a friend who owns a truck. Keep your promises. **Call your mother.**

Sixty years ago I started going to church. That's when I learned that calling on the Lord in addition to my mom, was also an essential thing to do. It all started in Sunday School when I opened up my songbook and sang: *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so . . . with an encore of . . . Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow black and white, they are precious in God's sight. . .* I remember feeling happy knowing that I belonged in church and that Jesus loved me too. I remember hearing the preacher read from the Bible things that Jesus said about himself: *I am the true vine and my Heavenly Parent is the true gardener . . . Abide in me and I will abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me (John 15: 1a, 4, adapted) . . .* I remember feeling good knowing that Jesus promised to stay intimately connected with his disciples so that they could learn how to love God, themselves, and one another. And, I remember the first Sunday that I felt something more. It happened when Marilyn Mattoon, a childless mother of faith, played on the organ and the congregation began singing: *Abide with me; fast falls the eventide: The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless, O abide with me. As we sang, I realized that all the adult church people weren't calling upon their earthly mothers for comfort, help, and growth in love, but rather were calling upon the Lord. That day, in the company of people tuned into the gospel word and in tune with the abiding Presence of Divine Love . . .* I experienced my childhood happiness of belonging to my mother turn into the deeper joy of belonging to God. That day I felt the joy of the eunuch who, after coming up out of the water of baptism, knew that he, like Jesus, was a Beloved Child of God.

This Mother's Day, although I hope that my children will always *call me* --- my prayer for them (and for all God's children) is that they will practice the faith habit of calling upon the Lord --- so that they will be filled as I am---with the baptized joy of Abiding Divine Love.