

Title: "Reaching Out with Faith" (The Story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch)
Acts 8:26-40 | Geldart | 1/12/25 | Tru

1. Welcome

- a. Good to be back together after snowmageddon – online sermon last Sun (thx to AJ & Frank!)
- b. Connect Cards/QR, Giving
- c. Mark – 2024 Giving Stmts (contact Mark at finance@tru.church)
- d. Kids- New Curriculum starts today – BUILDING FAITH (Systematic Theology)
- e. Youth kickoff tonight
- f. Flourishing WOMENS study starts this wed. – Talk to Amanda (QR code)

• **Introduction: MY STORY: GOING TO EAST ASIA**

- **I tend to play it safe. Generally risk averse naturally. Like what I know.**
- **Growing up mom wanted to travel**
 - **I did not. We made her cry (sorry mom)**
 - You can just look at it in a picture in a magazine
 - So I never traveled much. Esp not outside the US!
- Then in college, I was a part of a campus ministry and they sent students all around the world for summer missions trips
- **And I felt the inexplicable nudge from the HS to sign up to go to East Asia**
 - So after admitting it to myself and my family, drug my feet a while, then finally decided it was what I was going to do.
 - I did what I hated: sent letters asking for money. Raised support (big faith exercise for me!)
 - **[1] And eventually spent the summer overseas with a team from KSU in EA *pic**
 - In a country completely different from my own. Different language. Culture.
- It was extremely uncomfortable
 - Not only was it illegal to be a missionary where we went.
 - And the gov was cracking down significantly on the church.
 - And we were certainly under surveillance.
 - We had to use code when we spoke and wrote so as not to endanger our mission and the local believers there.
 - Yes that was all quite uncomfortable.
- **But also, I love to eat. But didn't know how to use chopsticks**
 - And in the country we were in, food in restaurants was served family style on a table with a lazy susan in the middle. Food is coming by..... sometimes fast.
 - AND the table at restaurants is considered DIRTY
 - If something falls, it's DEAD.
 - Let me tell you, I dropped lots and lots of food on tables. And my hunger was a good teacher!
 - I lost weight, then got quite good at chopsticks 😊
- But that's beside the point.

- We went as exchange students and were paired up by our university with local college students who could speak English.
- I had no idea what God was up to. And often felt like I didn't know what I was doing.
- But God works in amazing ways.
- Toward the end of our summer, I was able to be in the right place at the right time, and lead my local friend to faith in Jesus.
- Not because of anything awesome I was or did. But because God was at work. And I was just smart enough to say OK to him.
 - And follow where he led.
 - Reaching out when the Spirit nudged.
- **Tru's mission stmt** says we're a family of imperfect people, **REACHING OUT** by serving and sharing the love of JC.
- [2] Today we're talking about REACHING OUT with Faith – in God, and for others.
 - We're going to be looking at this theme of learning to be ready to say yes to God when his spirit nudges, even when it doesn't make sense at first, and watch how he does amazing things.

• [3] **Scripture Reading:** Acts 8:26-40 - The story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

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

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³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ^[37] ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

[6] ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

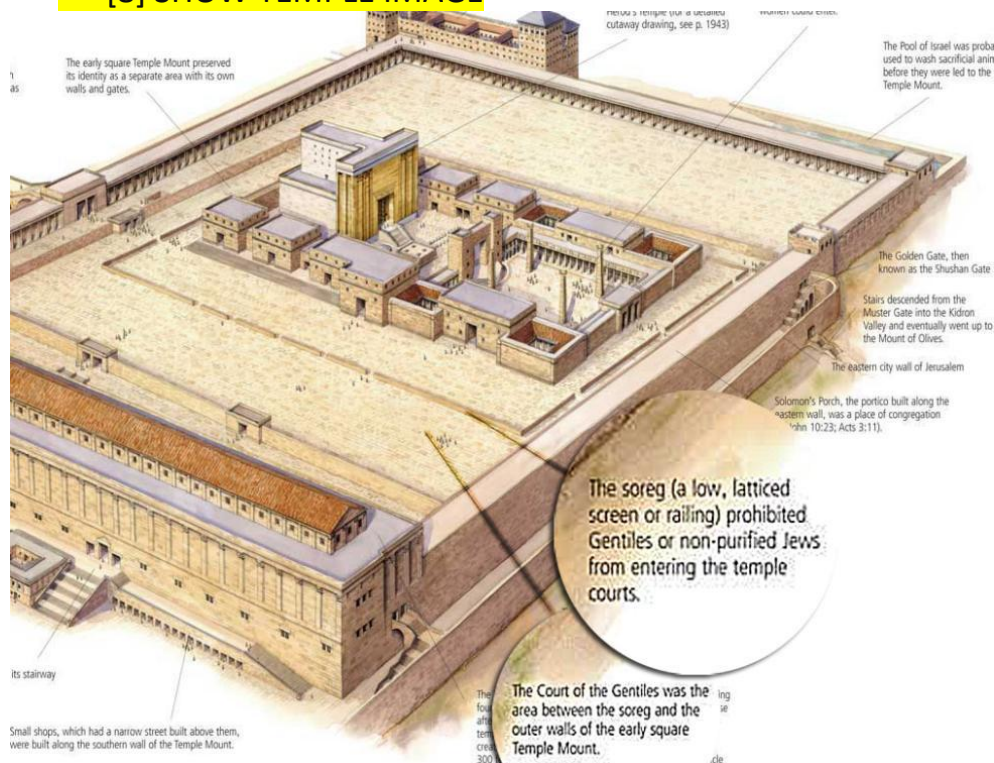
→ PRAY

2. Context and Background

- **Historical Context:** *Briefly explain the background of the Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip the Evangelist.*
- The eunuch was not from the country today known as Ethiopia
- "Ethiopian" was a Greek term for black-skinned peoples generally, often applied to Kush
- [7] IMAGE OF KUSH MAP
- "Candace" was the name given to all the female rulers or consorts of the [Kingdom of Kush](#) (now part of Sudan).
 - The capital city was [Meroë](#) (the ruins of which are in present day Sudan)
 - Capital of the vast kingdom of Kush for almost 1000 years.
 - Was known for its advanced metallurgy, art, and over 200 pyramids (more than in all of Egypt!)
- It's likely that the Ethiopian Eunuch would have been considered partially Jewish.
 - Ancient Jewish and Christian sources (Irenaeus and Jerome among them) agreed that the descendants of the Queen of Sheba by Solomon (some evidence she was the woman in the Song of Solomon book of the Bible), and accordingly the Ethiopian eunuch in particular, were to be regarded as at least partially Jewish.
 - It is for this reason that Cornelius and his household are regarded as the first "full" gentile baptized converts to Christianity (Acts 10:45-48), not the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8.
- Commentators generally suggest that the combination of "eunuch" together with the title "court official" indicates a literal eunuch --A male who has been castrated
 - Eunuchs were common officials in royal houses. The idea was that castrating males would make them ideal managers of royal harems and not likely to try to sexually engage the women or steal money or overthrow the rulers.
 - Typically this castration would have been done before puberty by cutting off his penis and crushing his testicles
 - So that he wouldn't be able to have sex
 - And wouldn't properly go through puberty
 - He would most likely have looked and acted somewhat differently as a result.

- The Lack of testosterone would have meant he grew up with smooth features, no facial hair, smaller than normal muscles in his arms and chest
- Extra fat around his midsection
- Wider hips.
- The relative increase in estrogen would have stimulated a condition called gynecomastia, in which the man would develop pronounced breasts.
- His voice would have stayed high pitched and pre-pubescent.
- In short, he sounded and looked different from others.
- Additionally, and most importantly for our story,
 - As a literal eunuch he would have been excluded from the Temple by the restriction in Deuteronomy 23:1
 - No one who has been emasculated by Cutting or crushing is allowed to enter the temple of Yahweh.
 - not allowed to enter the main part of the Temple or come near to God.
- Because of his disfigurement as a eunuch, He would not have made it past the Gentile Courts of the temple.

▪ [8] SHOW TEMPLE IMAGE



- There was a wall called a [soleg](#) that created a boundary for the gentiles and the unclean/impure.
 - Maybe when the eunuch says "What can stand in the way" (Acts 8:36) of me getting baptized, he is thinking of the soleg as a barrier to God's house.
- **His likely experience in the Temple** – only able to get so close. He was an outsider. Longed to get close to God. But was kept at a distance.
 - Rejected. He was broken. Excluded.

- After traveling ~1500 miles from Meroe in Kush to Jerusalem,
 - HE WAS GOING BACK without getting close enough.
 - (3k mi round trip!). He likely traveling with a caravan for 3-6 mo one way

- **LETS FOCUS NOW ON PHILIP**

3. Divine Encounters and Open Hearts

- **Philip's Calling:**

- Not Philip the Apostle -
 - He was one of the [Seven](#) First Deacons chosen to care for the poor of the [Christian](#) community in [Jerusalem](#) ([Acts 6](#)) – Eventually came to be called PHILIP THE EVANGELIST
 - And later on we find he eventually had 4 daughters who themselves also prophesied.
 - Started with an angel of the Lord instructed Philip to go to the desert road.
 - Even before that:
 - **[9] Mat 28 in his mind.**
 - ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
 - He, along with the Church wrestling with what this means and how to do it....
 - **[10] Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**
- **They begin to discover that** God directs us to people who are seeking Him, even if they are different from us. They are our Biblical neighbors.
 - **Who is my neighbor? – it’s the people that live next to you**
 - The people you like, hang out with.
 - People who are like you.
 - **But it’s also the people more broadly who share your world**
 - **Good Samaritan in Luke 10**
 - The Jew’s Neighbor is the half-breed Samaritan! The one you reject.
 - Despise. Avoid.
 - God Sent Philip to share the Good News with his Neighbors
 - **Acts 1:8**
 - **Beginning in Jerusalem, And Judea,**

- Then farther out to the half-Jews in Samaria
 - Right before our passage today, Philip was ministering in Samaria, and seeing huge numbers coming to Christ!
 - Then he heard an angel tell him to leave there and go into the desert and that's it.
 - Really??? Seems like things are going well here...
 - Is this really the Lord? Or is this just some bad dates I ate?
 - Now God is pushing the Good News of His Kingdom out to farther flung "half-Jews". Not just Samaritans close to home
 - But half-Jew Africans from 1500 miles away
 - AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
 - Ethiopia (Kingdom of Kush) was considered the ends of the earth, edge of the map!
- And Philip didn't even have to travel there himself. God brought them close to him!
 - Though Philip still had to go out into the desert to seek him
- And this ups the ante, stretches Philip's understanding not only by bringing a half-Jew from the ends of the Earth, but a eunuch to boot!
 - Someone who had been barred from coming close to God's temple.
 - Someone with questionable physical and sexual characteristics – especially to a Jew.
- Who is my neighbor?
 - It's everyone. Near and Far. Like and unlike.
 - Normal and abnormal
 - God is drawing people from EVERY TONGUE TRIBE AND PEOPLE to himself
 - And He often brings them TO HIS CHILDREN, **that we may REACH OUT** to share with them the Good News about Jesus
- **The Ethiopian's Seeking Heart:** It's clear to see the Ethiopian's genuine desire to understand Scripture and know God.
 - **Even so, it's difficult for me to imagine his disappointment and hurt at traveling all that way, coming so close.**
 - Walking into the temple at long last
 - And then, after all that, getting SO CLOSE,
 - Being refused entrance to participate in worship because of what had been done to his body.
 - Not something wrong he'd done
 - But something wrong with WHO HE WAS.
 - HE WAS unacceptable at a fundamental level.
 - He must have been crushed as he was riding home. Pun intended.
 - That he was reading the prophet Isaiah at all instead of giving up on a religious system that prohibited him from full participation is testimony to his faithfulness to God.

- Even when he was turned away, he didn't stop.
 - Even in his despair, hope had not completely died.
- Phillip heard him reading the particularly applicable passage:
 - **[11] In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.** *Who can speak of his descendants?* (Isaiah 53:8).
 - Messianic prophecy written 700 years before this!
 - The anguish of soul that this man must have felt reading about humiliation, deprivation of justice and lack of descendants must have been tortuous after being turned away from his pilgrimage to the temple.
 - Yet it piqued his interest
 - Into his despair, God's Spirit brought Phillip to explain that this passage pointed to the messiah.
 - **This was a Spirit led KAIROS moment if there ever was one!**
 - Kairos – time – not clock time, but THE RIGHT TIME, the perfect time.
 - A time you must seize before it's gone.
 - Philip was ready and able to REACH OUT AND SHARE about JESUS
 - Jesus, THE MESSIAH - who was also humiliated and deprived of justice.
 - Jesus, who also would not have a family or descendants.
- **The eunuch's next question to Phillip must be read in this context.**
 - If Jesus, the messiah and the holy one of God, could empathize with this man's suffering, and if he indeed had come and completed his mission, if he had indeed risen from the dead and was inviting all people to repent and follow him,
 - If he was the healer of lepers, the restorer of the lame and the blind,
 - And the raiser of the dead....
 - **What was to stop him from finally being baptized and declared pure and whole?**
 - Nothing!
 - Not the sore wall in the Jerusalem Temple
 - Not the barrier of his physical mutilation
 - Not his inability to have a family or descendants
 - He wasn't just displaying eagerness to be baptized but making sure that nothing still stood in the way of his being recognized as a full member of God's kingdom.
 - Even after Phillip was taken away, the eunuch, recognized as a whole and complete person,
 - **[12] HE went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).**
 - I believe this is one of the greatest understatements in Scripture.
- **Baptism and Joy:**
 - **He was NOT rejected by God.** Even if it seems he had been by his people.
 - **GOD accepted him and adopted him as a son.** Even as a Eunuch
 - Indeed, this had been God's plan all along
 - A few chapters later in Isaiah is this prophecy

- **[13] ISAIAH 56:4-5 To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant — to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.**
 - God had a place and a promise for a **Eunuch**.
 - He was not rejected – if he sought God and his righteousness, he would be accepted and provided for by what Jesus did on the Cross!
 - Brought close to himself – given a name – an **IDENTITY – INSIDE HIS TEMPLE, better than decedents**, better than sons or daughters!
- Jesus Himself, in talking about what makes a person whole, and about living a celibate life, said:
 - **[14] Matthew 19:12-14 "For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."**
- **Jesus understood the ultimate loss of children by emasculated men took away worldly joy & blessings ---- and yet it also caused the Eunuchs to inherit a profound spiritual joy & blessing in the kingdom of heaven.**
 - **Jesus understood – was link a eunuch in this way, in effect, by choice. Chose a life of celibacy without physical offspring.**
 - Trusting that the Father could give him a greater family through obedience.
- So, Even though the Eunuch was unable to have biological children on his own.
 - **Yet he was to become the Spiritual Father of untold thousands.**
 - **Tradition and Early Church Fathers like Irenaeus has him going back home to Ethiopia and planting the first church there... which thrived!**

[15] BIG IDEA - God wants to work through us to reach out with faith to our neighbors - even when it's uncomfortable, outside our comfort zone, even when we don't see it all clearly at first.

→ REACHING OUT WITH FAITH – with the love and message of Jesus.

- I encourage us to expect and look for amazing things God can do through our willingness to reach out with faith.
- **It all started with Philip's obedience to the leading of God's Spirit**
 - Even though it didn't make much sense Philip responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting without hesitation.
 - Even though things were GOOD and going very well in Samaria,
 - And God said leave there and go to the desert.... And wait.
 - **He had enough experience and trust with God's Spirit to say yes when prompted.** Even if it didn't make much sense initially.

- So let's likewise be attentive and obedient to the Holy Spirit's guidance in our own lives.
 - **Who knows what God might do THROUGH you. Through US?**
 - **Through a simple act of obedience.**
 - **Kairos moment**
 - **A relationship cultivated and nurtured with your neighbor**
 - **A conversation taken advantage of.**
 - **A person invested in. Discipled. Loved.**
 - People beloved by God, with significant struggles
 - Those lost and dead in their sins,
 - Those who are ready, hungry for God and his Gospel
 - **The depressed**
 - **Addicts**
 - **Those without means**
 - **Alone and without families**
 - **Those with significant sexual trauma**
 - **Various understandings of their own sexualities.**
 - **The broken and the lost and the rejected**
 - All brought near through the powerful Grace of Jesus
 - We've already heard testimonies about God doing this work today.
 - Through US, with our neighbors
 - I know many of you have stories yet unshared.
 - AND He's got so much more to come
 - **[16] Ephesians 2:¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

[16] Application for the New Year

- [17] We're going to Continue Focusing on Jesus' Matt 28 call to Multiply disciples, leaders, and churches - TOGETHER
 - to keep leaning in this year to our vision to reach out with Christ's love and message
 - And responding to the HS.
 - **Multiplication Focus**
 - Becoming the people and church who do this naturally, out of an overflow of our life in God and with one another
 - Reaching out individually, but also corporately. Together.
 - Open and Eager for God to use us to bless our neighbors, and help them find what we've found in Jesus.
- **Practical Steps INDIVIDUALLY:**
 - practical suggestions on how we can be more attentive to the Holy Spirit's leading and reach out in faith.
 - **[18] Get to know your neighbors – beginning with your actual neighbors**
 - **Reach out - Laying the groundwork of relationship for the Spirit's Work**

- [19] Learn to pay attention to the nudges of the Spirit in your daily life, and default to obeying, even when you don't understand, or it feels strange or silly.
 - Spend regular time in God's Word (main way God speaks to us)
 - Philip was ready to respond with Scripture because he had spent lots of time beforehand reading, memorizing, studying God's Word.
 - The Spirit will not RECALL what the mind has not INSTALLED
 - Spending extra time in the Gospels and Acts, saturating yourself in the life and teachings of Jesus and his continued work through his HS in the Church.
 - Spend regular time in prayer (speaking as well as LISTENING to the HS)
 - A great resource for growing in prayer is A PRAYING LIFE
- [20] WOTY as part of increasing our readiness, ability to reach out when God leads us
 - Grow! Sanctification. Practice. Increasing both skill and spiritual maturity.
 - Cooperation with the HS. Our effort. His power and provision.

7. Closing Prayer: Pray for courage, faith, and sensitivity to God's guidance this year, and opportunities to reach out to our neighbors.

[21] COMMUNION

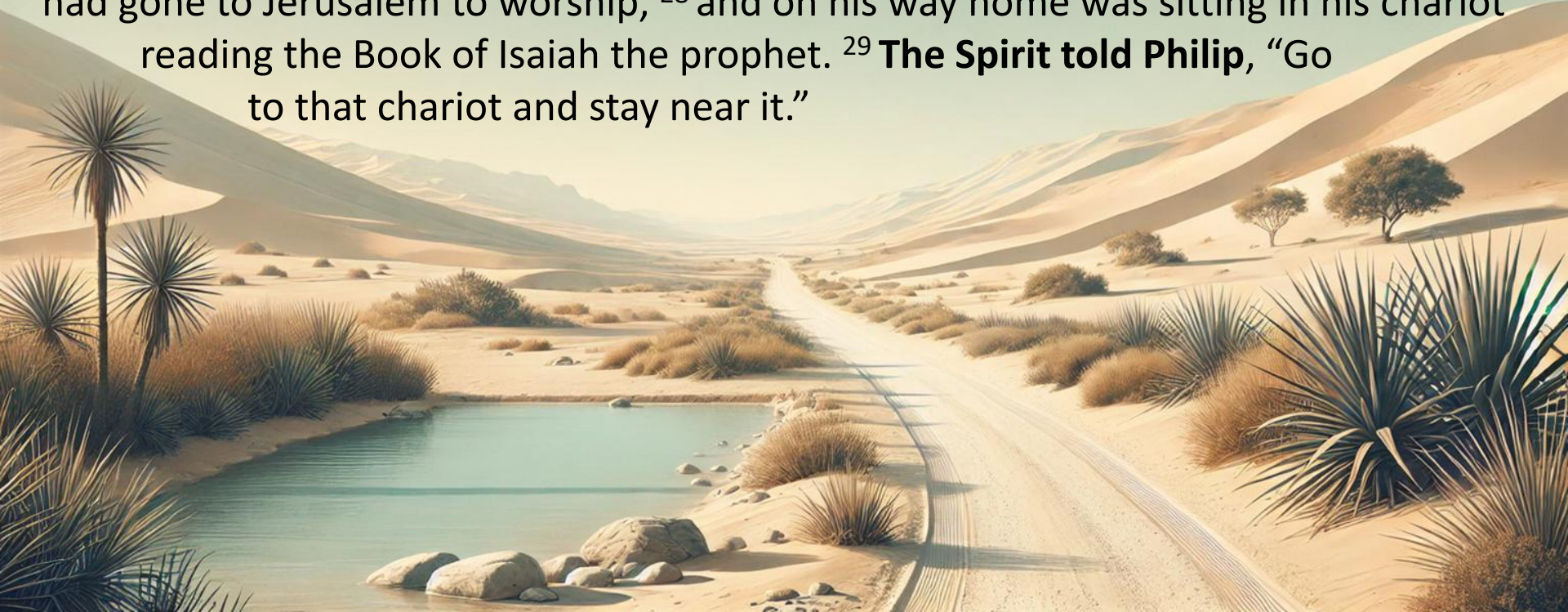


Reaching Out with Faith

Acts 8:24-40

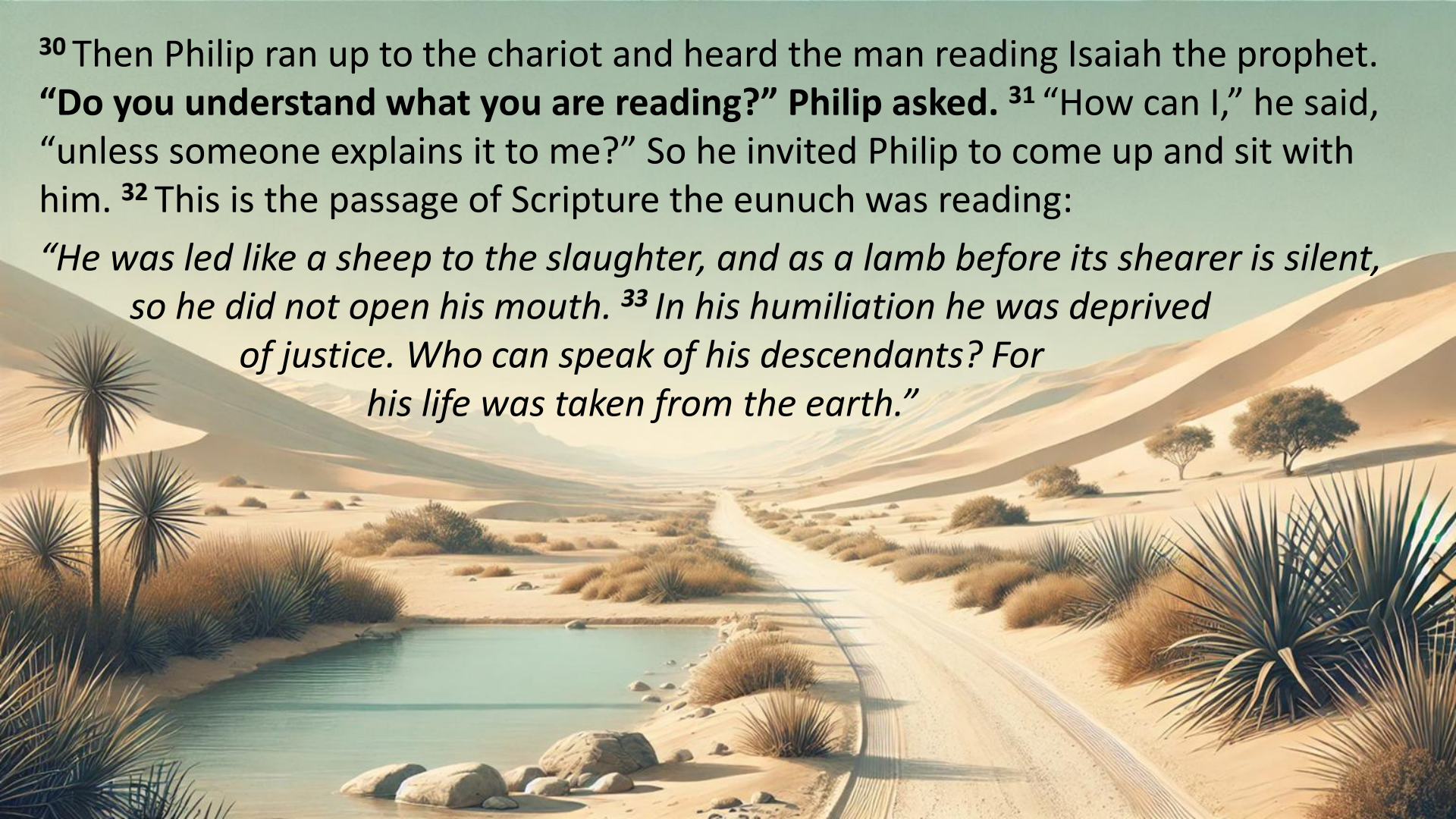


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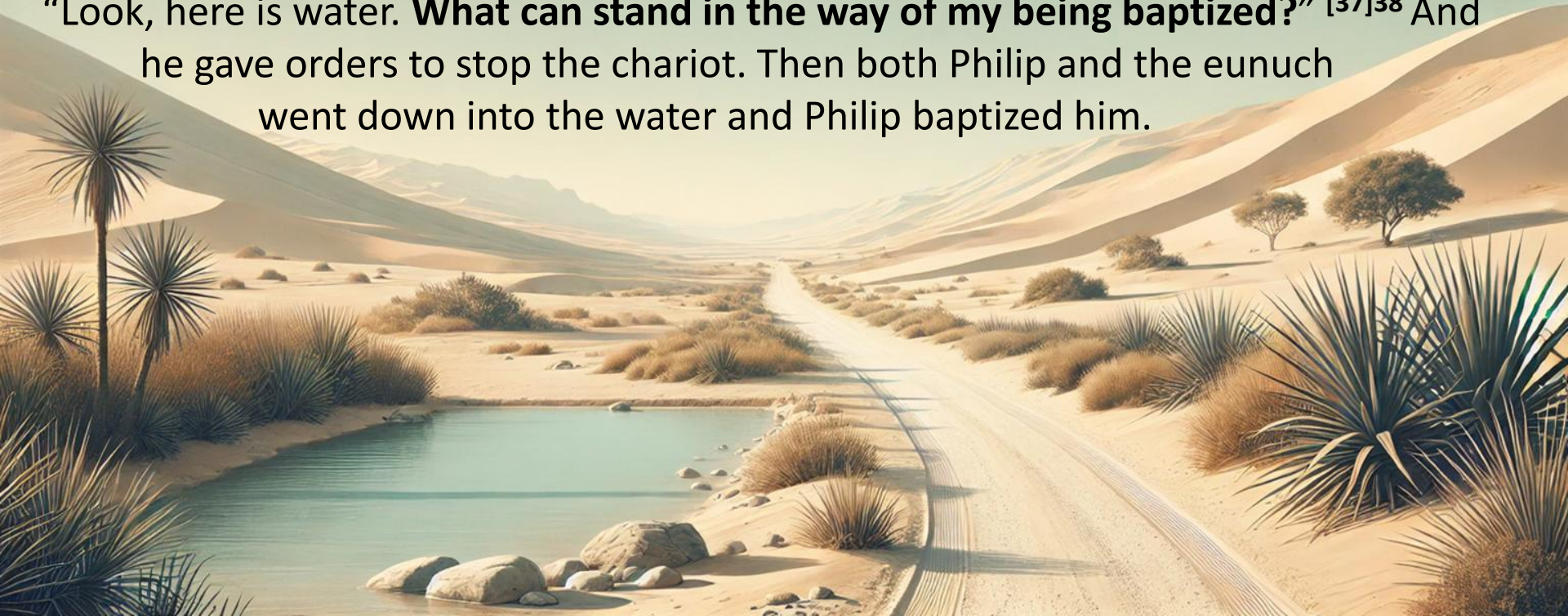
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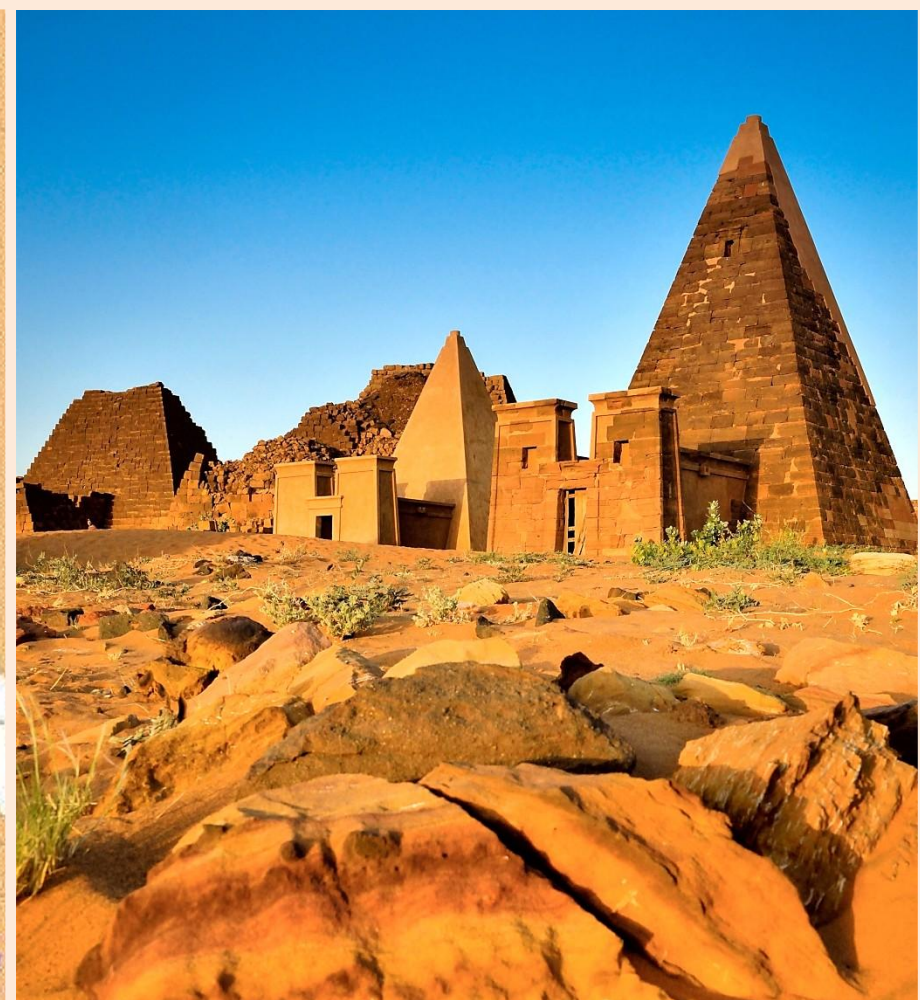
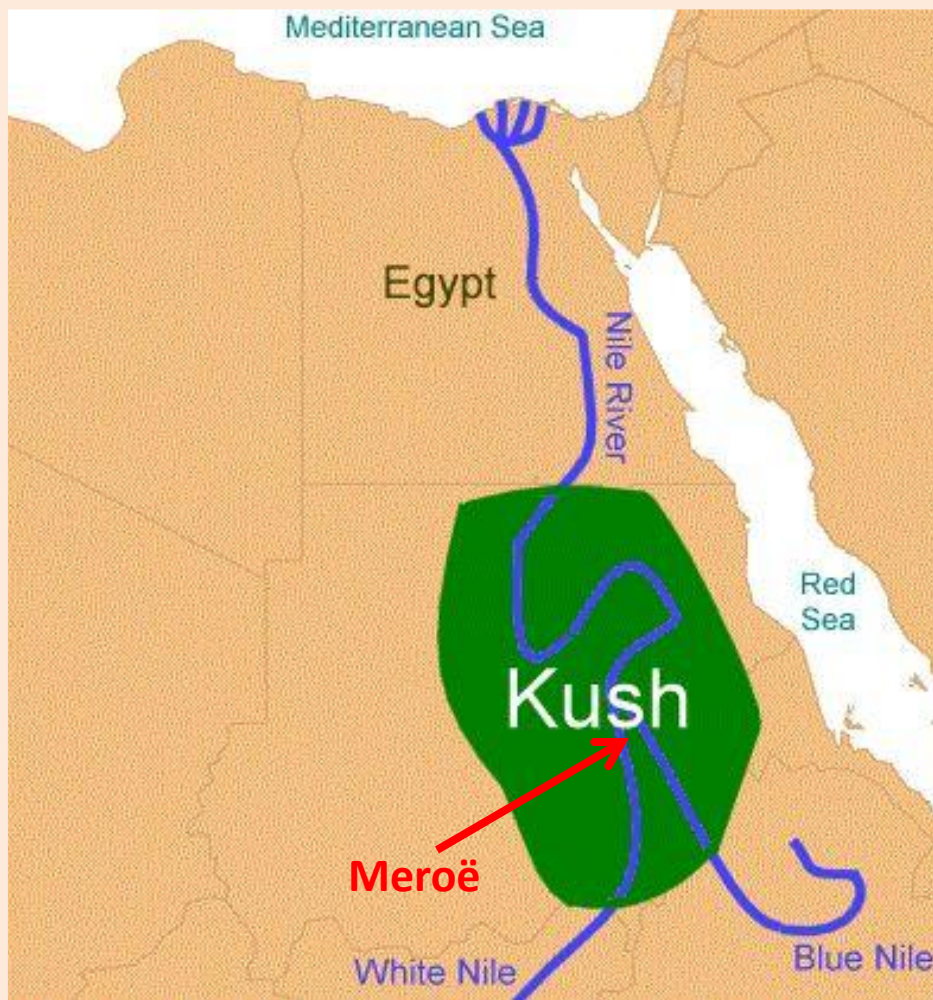
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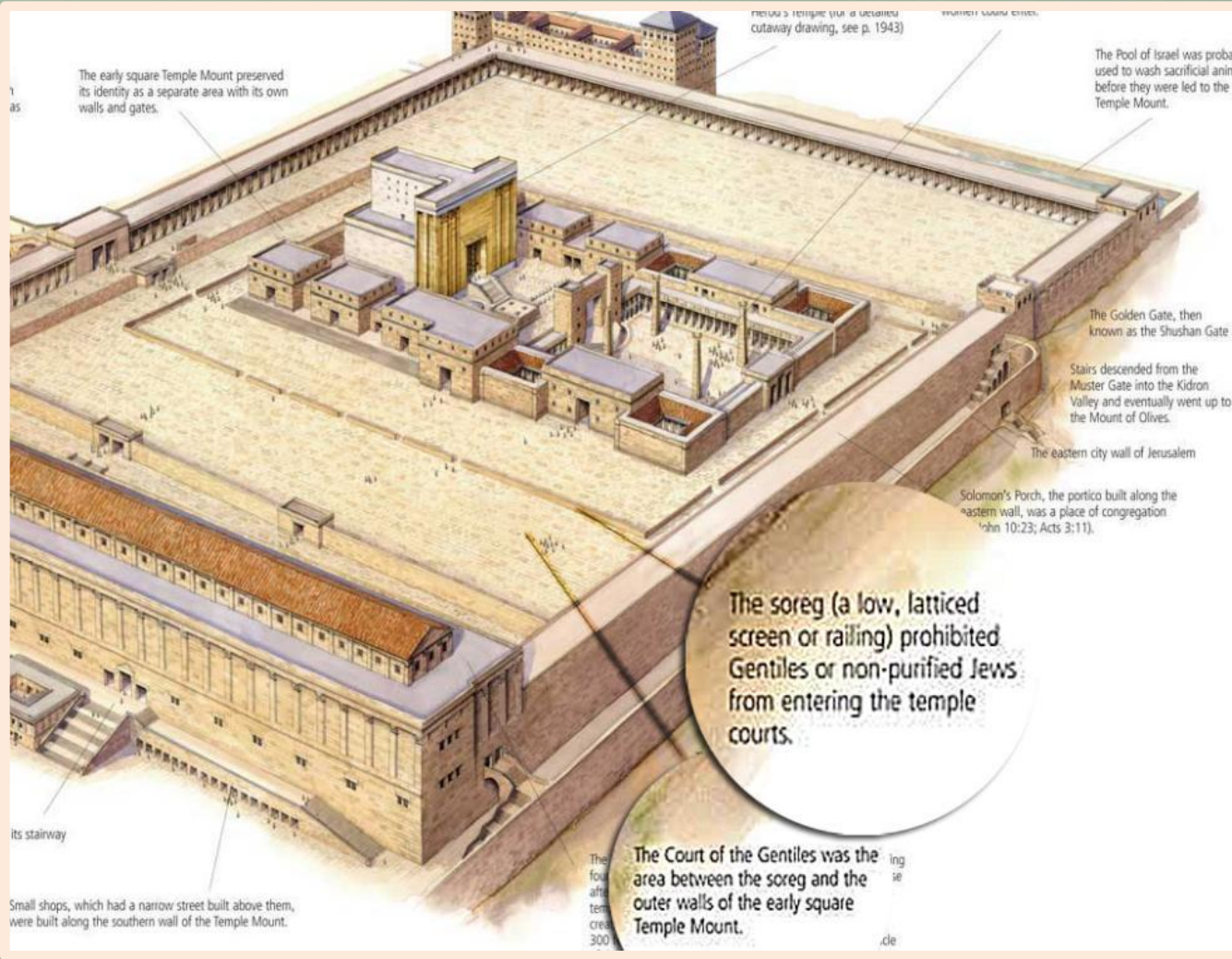


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The early square Temple Mount preserved its identity as a separate area with its own walls and gates.

FIGURE 3.10 THE TEMPLE MOUNT (see p. 1943)

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The Pool of Israel was probably used to wash sacrificial animals before they were led to the Temple Mount.

The Golden Gate, then known as the Shushan Gate

Stairs descended from the Muster Gate into the Kidron Valley and eventually went up to the Mount of Olives.

The eastern city wall of Jerusalem

Solomon's Porch, the portico built along the eastern wall, was a place of congregation (John 10:23; Acts 3:11).

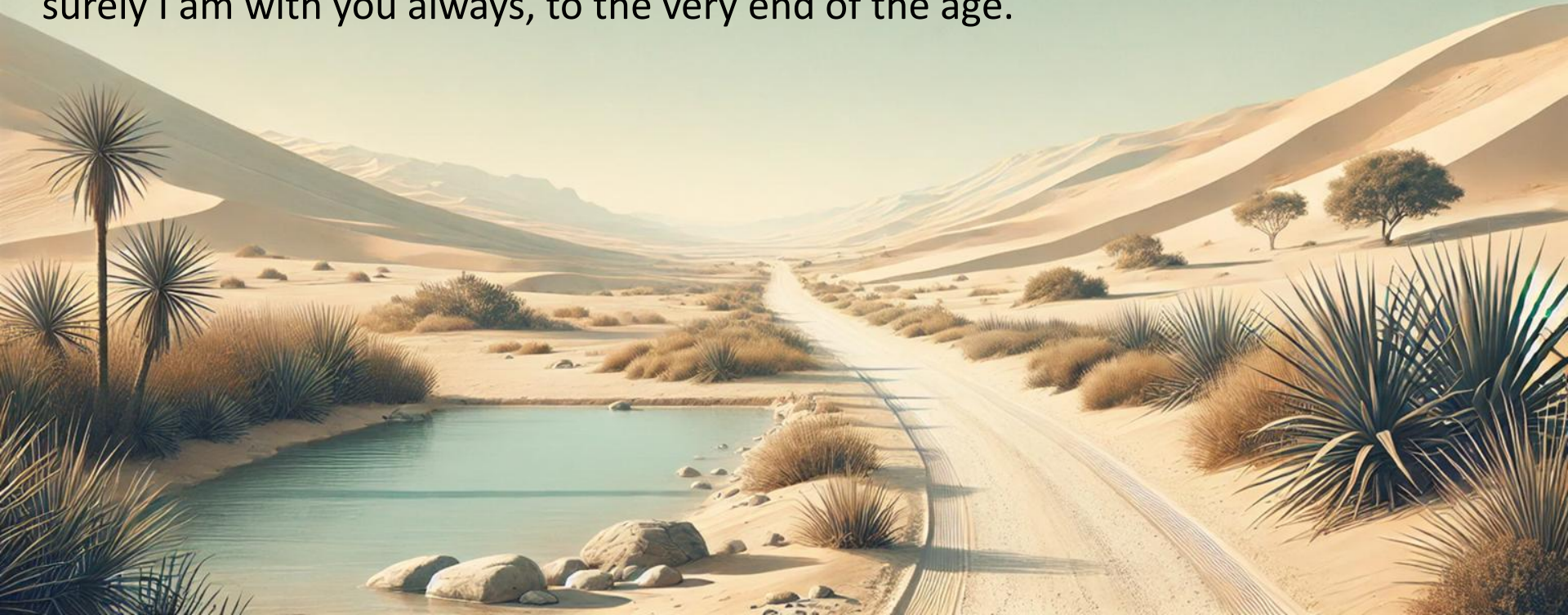
The soleg (a low, latticed screen or railing) prohibited Gentiles or non-purified Jews from entering the temple courts.

The Court of the Gentiles was the area between the soleg and the outer walls of the early square Temple Mount.

its stairway

Small shops, which had a narrow street built above them, were built along the southern wall of the Temple Mount.

MATTHEW 28:18-20 ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



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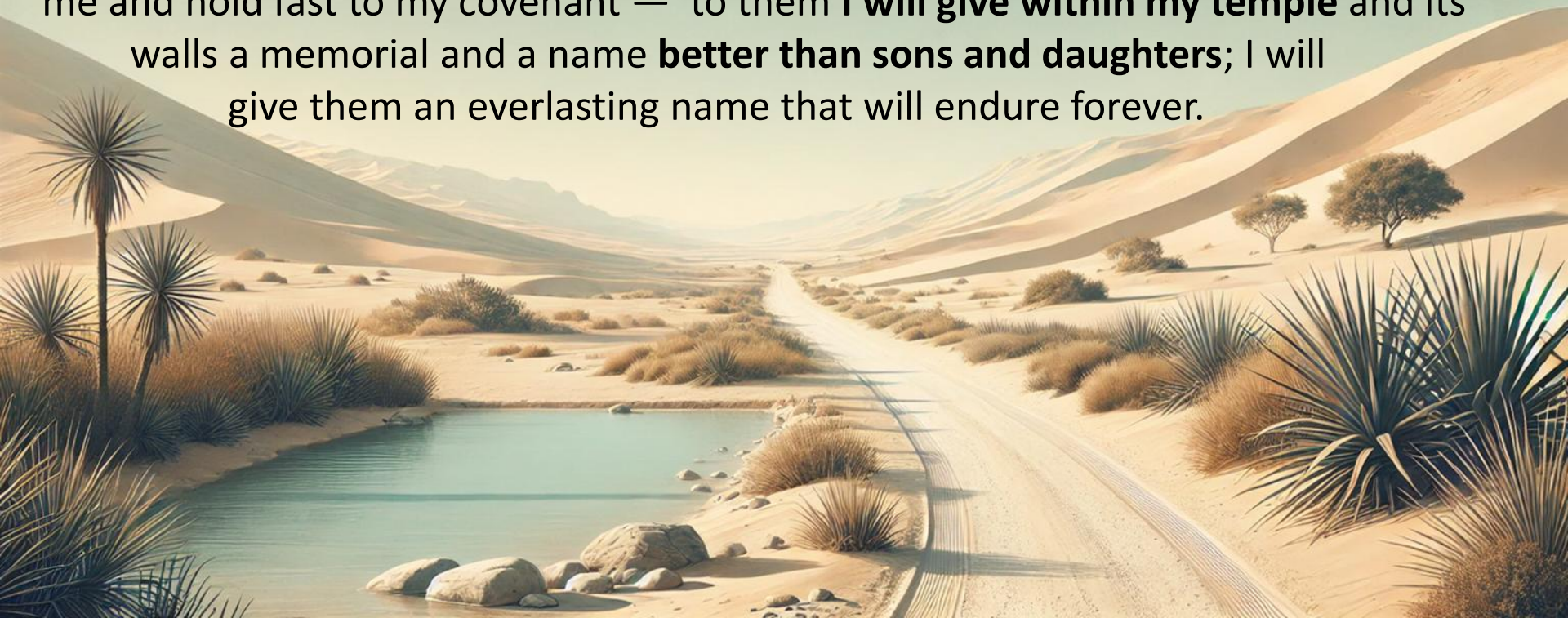


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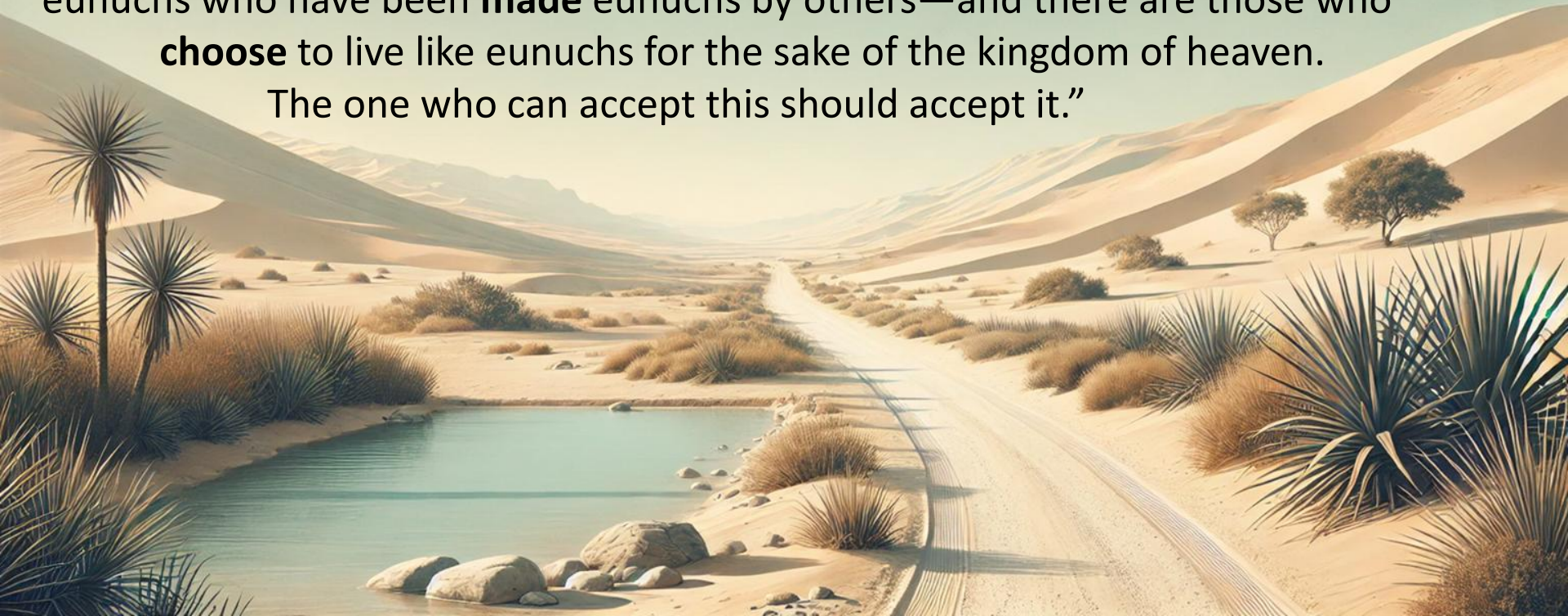
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Reaching Out with Faith



APPLICATIONS



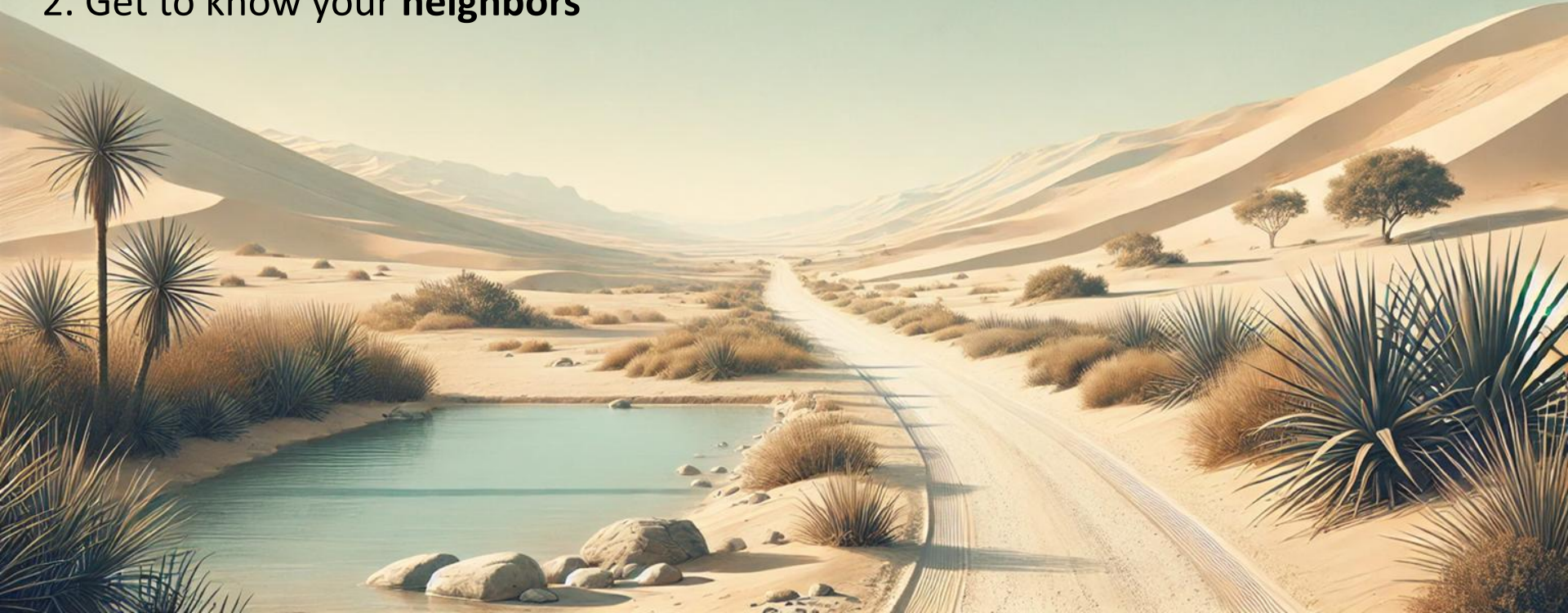
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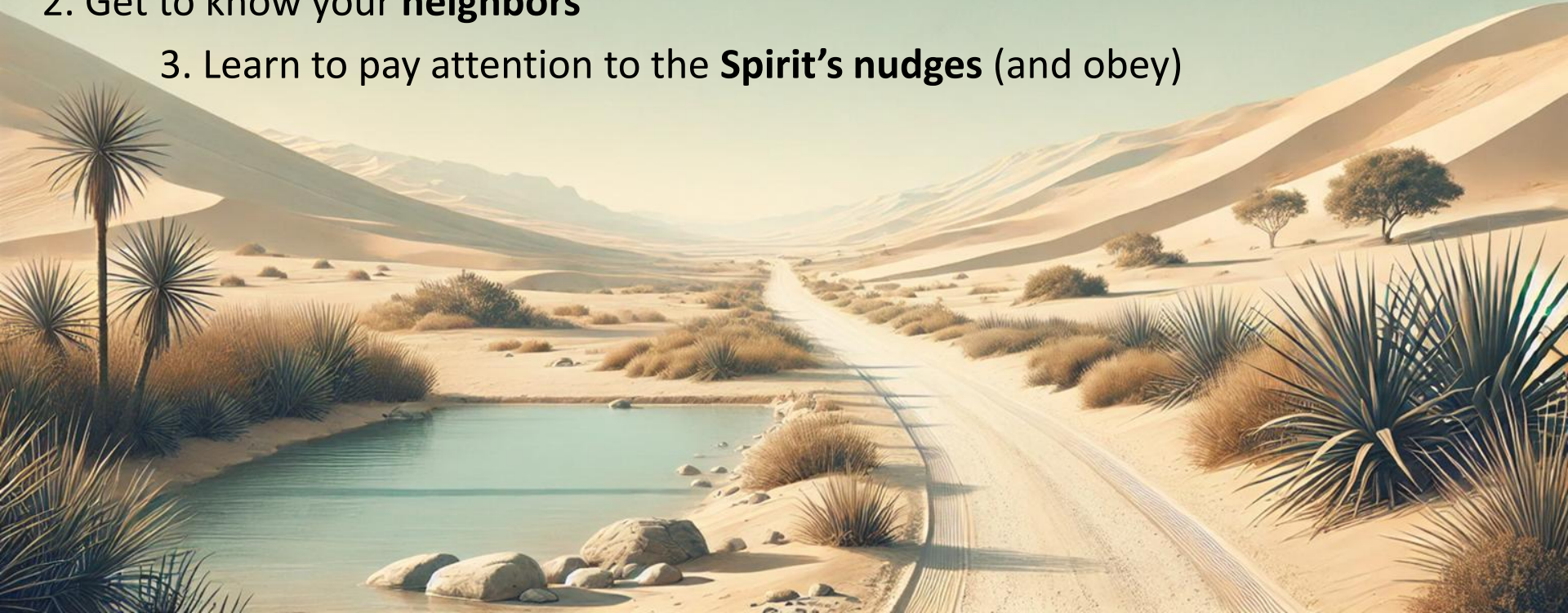
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4. Lean into **WOTY** this year



COMMUNION

