

Philip and the Ethiopian Devotions **Monday, January 30**

Opening thought - what did you think about the Lawn Chair Larry story? What was funny and sad about it?

Read - Acts 1:8, 8:1-13

- In what ways do you see Philip living out the call in Acts 1:8?

- What kinds of challenges do you think Philip faced in bringing the gospel of the kingdom to Samaria?

Pastor Ben reminded us in his sermon that ordinary believers left Jerusalem and shared the gospel as they went. Ordinary believers were willing to declare the gospel and many people came to Christ. The key churches in Antioch, Alexandria and Rome were all planted by unknown, ordinary people.

- What is challenging about the call upon us as believers in Acts 1:8? What are some roadblocks for you in being a faithful witnesses where God has set you?

Read Acts 8:4-5 and John 4:1-4. How is Philip acting like Jesus? Why is reaching out to Samaritans so hard / difficult?

- Who are some modern day "Samaritans" for you? Why?

Pastor Ben challenged us when he said, "we must continue to find ways to share the gospel with those who are around us; to reach people cross culturally probably means just knocking on our neighbors door. We need the church to reflect the diversity of our city and our neighborhoods. How can we be stretched, as believers, to do this as the church?"

- Reflect - *In what ways could our Covenant Group reach out in word or deed with the gospel (hands, feet and mouth of Jesus) to our Palm Bay neighbors? In what ways can (should we) be praying each week for the lost we know or the needy that are nearby? Pray about this. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Write down what you hear.*

Tuesday, January 31

Opening thought - when have you felt the specific call of God to share the gospel?

Read - Acts 8:26-31

- What stands out to you in this passage as far the "ordinary life" of Philip?

- How do you see God at work even as Philip is being obedient to the Lord?

Pastor Ben spoke about the bold obedience of Philip to all that God was asking of him.

Philip is having to overcome some cultural stereotypes to reach out to Samaritans as well as trusting God to give him the words to say. Yet he is available, willing and prepared.

- In what ways do you feel ready and prepared to share the gospel and in what ways do you feel ill-equipped?

Pastor Ben pointed out that in verse 30, Philip listened well and then asked a good question that led to more discussion. These were 2 specific actions that led to Philip being a faithful witness.

- As you think about those God has put in your life (work, play, neighbors, family, friends) how can you be a better listener and question-asker?

- What are some good questions you could have "at the ready" for those non-Christian friends of yours that could lead to an evangelistic conversation?

Reflect - take some time to pray for those in your life whom you believe God would have you reach out to and be a witness to. Ask the Holy Spirit to quicken your ears / heart to hear His promptings and be obedient to His directions.

Wednesday, February 1

Opening thought - what is it about evangelism or being a witness that is scary or intimidating or even exciting?

Read - Acts 8:26-40

- How do you see the Holy Spirit at work in this passage? (Many answers to this)

- How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work on your life over the last couple of weeks?

Pastor Ben stated that many times in the book of Acts the Holy Spirit prompts believers to act and move to share the gospel. But for believers today, the question remains, "are we listening for the Spirit's voice?" "Am I a willing vessel?" The best motive for sharing the gospel is bold confidence in the Holy Spirit to do his work to change people, not in my own ability to change others.

- How do you see this bold confidence in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; 1 Corinthians 15:10?

Reflect - *our greatest hope to share is Christ Jesus, who willingly took our sins and gave us his perfect righteousness. But we must find ways to share this in a way and with words that people can understand and digest. As we do this, we must point people to see and read about the Jesus of the Scriptures, not a Jesus of their own imaginations.*

- *Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you this day and this week to share the gospel with those around you. Ask Him for boldness in opening your lips to witness to Him. Ask Him for wisdom to know what to say. And look 🙏🙏 for how the Spirit will answer these prayers!!*

Philip and the Ethiopian - Acts 8:1-5; 26-40

Takeaway truth: Our call to share Christ involves God's ownership and our obedience.

Lawn chair Larry story: question asked of him, "why did you do this?" Answer: "I just got tired of sitting around."

- We can feel like this, just bored or sitting around. Yet as believers we are called to storm the gates of hell. But how many of us are honestly engaged in doing this. 60% of the PCA are in plateau mode.
- Yet this passage challenges us!

Sharing Christ means:

1. Enduring Persecution (v. 1-4)

- A. Great persecution broke out because of the stoning of Stephen and the open arresting and killings of Christians. First martyr is Stephen because he spoke of Jesus as the only Savior of men.
- B. What would it be like if this happened today? Worth thinking about because this happens around the world every day. In 2016 - 90,000 Christians were murdered. This is more than the population of Melbourne.
- C. Where the church is growing the most, there is persecution. Acts 1:8 - empowered to be His witnesses everywhere. Acts 2 - speaking the gospel to all peoples in their own languages. But yet until Acts 8 no one is leaving Jerusalem to go and share the gospel.
- D. Everyone was scattered yet the Apostles didn't leave. But the ordinary believers did leave and share the gospel as they left. Ordinary believers were willing to declare the gospel and many people came to Christ. The key churches by the end of the First Century were planted by unknown, ordinary people. (Antioch, Alexandria and Rome).

2. Reaching Cross Culturally (vs. 5)

- A. Philip went to Samaria and proclaimed the gospel there! And he is literally following on the steps of Jesus by doing this. The Jews hated and ostracized the Samaritans (unworthy, unclean "half-Jews"). Jesus himself purposefully encounters this group in John 4. He intentionally went to a woman (prostitute) and shared the gospel.
- B. Samaritans weren't the nicest people to the Jews (launching pigs at the temple) 🤔😞. Thus Philip had some good reasons to not want to share the gospel with them. Here the gospel begins to take root in Philip to help him overcome his barriers to loving this particular group of people.
- C. We must continue to find a way to share the gospel with those who are around us. To reach cross culturally probably means just knocking on the neighbors door. We want the church to reflect the diversity of the city and the neighborhoods we live in. How can we be stretched, as believers, to do this as a church?
- D. Revelation 7:9-10 -- beautiful picture of the diversity of heaven!

3. Obeying Boldly (vs. 26-27a, 30-31)

- A. Angel of the Lord tells Philip what to do and he obeys! God's call here is just a specific direction, not a destination! Unlikely place to do evangelism. Our response should be to obey boldly!
- B. Uncomfortable - Philip is being asked to do something uncomfortable. This is the enemy and not an easy walk (over a hundred miles). He is trusting that God is in control. He is ready to share the gospel at a moments notice. There are needs all around us and it's God who will make it happen right before our eyes.
- C. Sometimes we feel unsure about what to say or do. Yet look at verse 30! Philip is listening, he asks questions; he builds a relationship and sticks with the man; he is prepared with the message to share (took him to the scriptures); stated small and then moved on to the next thing (who is one person to love on, pray for and reach out to).

4. Trusting the Holy Spirit (27b-29)
 - A. "The Spirit told Philip...." Verse 26, 29 the Spirit is directing Philip's steps and thoughts. The Spirit is at work in the Ethiopian's heart and mind. (Notice he is there to worship YHWH yet he is still curious about God). This man wants to know the answer because God has already been at work. (See takeaway truth). This is providence! God at work for His glory and the good of his people.
 - B. Effectively working to call the Ethiopian to God (effectual calling) - to make them aware of their need, to see their sin and to move in their will to want God (Eph. 2:1ff). Be sensitive the leading of the Holy Spirit. Many times in Acts He prompts believers to act and move to share the gospel. Are we listening for His voice? Am I a willing vessel. See this truth in 1 Cor. 3:6-7. The best motive for sharing the gospel is bold confidence in the Spirit to do his work to change people, not in my own ability to change others.
5. Rejoicing in the Gospel (vs. 32-40)
 - A. Jesus is the focus of this conversation that is going on between Philip and the Ethiopian.
 - B. By remaining silent he willingly took our guilt. This is what silence implies - guilt! The Lamb of God who took to himself the sin of the world! Jesus died in our place.
 - C. The Ethiopian believes this message...and yet Eusebius (church historian) tells us that he went on to plant the first church in Africa!