

Getting Started Sharing (Acts 8:26-40)

Background: Persecution/Scattering (Great Commission; Spirit upon for witness; Judea and Samaria; Philip)

I would like us to see this text as a helpful guide to sharing our faith (personal evangelism)

- A shift has happened in the Book of Acts... and also with regards to evangelism (preaching the gospel)
 - First 7 chapters contained mostly preaching to large groups in Jerusalem
 - Going forward, we will see a greater emphasis on personal evangelism (**scattered**)
 - Both are good—but one is significantly more effective than the other (**informal survey**)
 - See! But, fewer and fewer Christians believe they have a responsibility to share their faith¹
 - More and more believe it is the job of the church gathering² (not true; not most effective!)
- We do have a call from God to share our faith personally
 - Daunting; scary; puzzling—but also a joy and privilege (the class)

The Story of Philip and the Ethiopian offer us some help

- Some background on the Ethiopian
 - Important, high ranking official (He handled the Queen of Ethiopia's money)
 - He was a eunuch
 - He was probably a convert to Judaism (He had gone to **Jerusalem to worship**, v. 27c)
- Some background on Philip
 - **Acts 6**; scattered to Samaria; powerful ministry
 - He seemed to have the gift of evangelism
 - In **Act 21:8** He is called "**Philip the evangelist**" (Living in Caesarea—see verse 40)
 - Twenty years later and has four daughters who are prophetesses

Not all of us are gifted in evangelism (☹ mean we don't do it) (Cf. serving; generosity; discernment)

- Why do we need to do it? (**2 Corinthians 5:17-20, NIV**)
- We are all called to do it... so, how shall we begin?

1. God was leading Philip (Witness as obedience)

- First, we do believe in the leading of the Holy Spirit (**The Spirit told Philip... in verse 29 + verse 26**)
- The question isn't whether or not God is willing to lead us, the question is whether or not we are **willing to obey** His leading
 - (nearly half of Christians will not risk being rejected by friend)³
 - Witness requires obedience (Cf. **Acts 8:26-27a & 29-30a, NIV**)
 - Through his obedience the Lord opened a door to witness (divine appointment)
 - Would have been intimidating (foreign official in a chariot)
 - For Philip to obey the Lord it would have taken a degree of boldness
 - Also, the chariot had not stopped!! (see **verse 30a**; Cf. **verse 38**) (tenacious obedience)
- A valid question is: What are we actually called to obey? (General GC or specific callings)
 - Opposing views of "call" (E.g. The mission field)
 - Both are in play (We see Philip obeying both) (Obeying former opens things up to latter)
 - **"Obedience to the great commission and to the promptings of the Spirit is the key that unlocks the release of the Spirit into our lives and transforms us into being witnesses with Spirit-led boldness"** –Ajith Fernando⁴
 - Cf. **You shall be my witnesses** (the reason for the "upon experience")
- What about you? (Is there any prompting by the Spirit???)
 - (1) Determine to obey the GC; (2) Endeavor to discern the Spirit's specific leading

¹ Barna Group, *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age: How Christians' Approach to Sharing Their Faith Has Changed in 25 Years* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2018), 12.

² Ibid, 18.

³ Ibid, 13.

⁴ Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 288.

2. God was preparing the Ethiopian (Witness in partnership)

- Acts 8:27c-28, NIV
- God is always already at work
- We are just one link in what God is doing in someone's life (Cf. 1 Corinthians 3)
- Start praying for someone (this is where you begin to engage with and discover God's present work)
- The Ethiopian was seeking (His Jerusalem experience; wondering about Isaiah 53)
 - Feeling a bit excluded; distant; confused—but spiritually hungry

3. Ask some questions (Witness by discovery)

- This is where the work of God in Philip and the work of God in the Ethiopian collide!
- Acts 8:30-31, NIV
- Asking an apt question opened the door (we don't need to start with the answers)
- God is at work in people's lives, so try to figure out how
- Philip met the man where he was and stepped into what he was wrestling with
- We may need to start with someone's felt needs and help them see what Christianity has to say about that... from there we can lead them to recognize their need for Christ and His salvation
 - To discover their felt needs we may need to ask questions
 - You know how many people feel like the Ethiopian (see above), and so are also seeking?
 - "How's that working for you?"

4. Talk about what the Bible says (Witness with Scripture)

- Acts 8:32-35a, NIV
- Our witness must always be based on Scripture (we need not always quote it verbatim or know the exact chapter and verse)—but the ideas must be Bible
 - There is power in the Word of God (Isaiah 55:10-11, NIV)
- The challenge from Pastor Ricky (educate yourself) (2 Timothy 2:24-26, NASB)
- Finding ways:
 - Cf. The Romans Road
 - The Four R's
 - Realize God loves you (John 3:16)
 - Recognize you are a sinner (Romans 3:23)
 - Repent of your sins (1 John 1:9)
 - Receive Jesus as Lord (John 1:12)

5. Get to the main point (Witness about Jesus)

- Acts 8:35, NIV
- No matter where you start in the discussion you want to end with Jesus
- In the end, that is all that matters (What Jesus has done for them and what they will do with Him)
- We don't always have to close the deal... but we may!

Those are some basics for getting started... but **what are some hindrances** to us diving in?

- I think we need to identify those, be honest about them, and let the gospel confront them
- Apathy? Fear? Unpreparedness?
- Let's pray for boldness (Acts 4:29-32, NIV)
- Start praying for someone...
- Rejoice in your own salvation now
- Jesus and His Kingdom and Gospel are worth it!