

Acts 8: Love the Nations
October 11, 2015 • Go Week 2015

Philip's continual obedience to God's call leads him to participate in the forefront of the missionary movement.

"And Saul approved of his [Stephen's] execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were scattered throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Acts 8:1

Flow of Acts

- Jesus ascends into heaven, but promises the Holy Spirit
- Jesus gives a command to reach Jerusalem, Judea/Samaria, Ends of the earth
- The Holy Spirit comes, indwelling His people and starting the church (Pentecost) among the Jews who were already among the nations
- Persecution comes as an unplanned accelerant to the Church Planting Movement
- Unlikely leaders (like Saul) are identified, but not yet sanctified into His overall plan
- Believers are "scattered" from a human perspective, but "sent" from a heavenly perspective
- And all of the sudden, the church is in Judea and Samaria (Whoop!)

ACTS 8:4-8

"4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city."

ACTS 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.

So previously Philip had traveled north into Samaria – a known (but disliked) culture. Now the angel of the Lord has sent Philip south, into the desert – one of the remotest parts of the region (should be sounding interesting...)

27 And he rose and went.

Every time I read a verse like Acts 8:27, I have to ask myself "What is different in Philip's day and mine?" At the moment of the God's request, Philip responds.

Could it have been:

- That there was an angel of the Lord making the request? Maybe so, but that brings up two more questions in my mind:
 - Do I really believe that the Scriptures are authoritative?
 - Do I really believe that the Scriptures are speaking to me?
 - If so, is my obedience to God's call immediate and full?

ACTS 8:26-40 Continued

27 And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

ACTS 8:31

"How can I unless someone guides me?"

ROMANS 10:14-15

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Can God reach the lost without us?

Absolutely! But his normative path (Plan A) is to use his people to reach the nations. Why?

- Because we relate to broken people
- It causes us to trust in God

ACTS 8:26-40 Continued

32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.*

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"

ACTS 8:35-40

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Key Points of Passage:

- Philip was in the midst of something already.
- The Lord led Philip away to an unknown circumstance.
- Philip met someone who was spiritually interested, but not scripturally aware.

"How can I understand unless someone guides me?"

- Philip realized that his knowledge of Jesus was a stewardship to be shared

Many want to believe, but are waiting for spiritual guides to help them.

ROMANS 15:20-21

"And thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.'"

ACTS 21:8ff

"On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him."

Philip's life illustrates to us:

- Calling follows character
- God's purpose follows preparation
- Stewardship follows blessing

Key Question: What if the life you have arranged up to this point isn't the end, but the means? Are you willing to give that enough thought to see what the Lord has waiting for you?

The Great Commission was not given as an option for some, but a command to all.

