

Acts 8:26-35 (NIV) 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 Candace, 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.” {30} Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. {31} “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. {32} 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. {33} In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” {34} The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” {35} Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

44-08-01-Principles of Sharing the Gospel
evangelism, friendliness, questions, answers
Acts 8:26-35

Jesus calls us to help people find the One what they are truly seeking.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as the Scripture reading)

–[God gave us a thirst reflex to keep us from dehydration, a hunger reflex to keep us from starvation, and a sexual ‘urge to merge’ to keep the planet populated. SO, it's not strange that God also gave us a spiritual reflex.] Whether people realize it or not, everyone hungers and thirsts for the spiritual life found only in a personal union with the God Who created us.

–Our **text** is the story of Philip sharing the Gospel with a stranger, *an Ethiopian eunuch*. Philip’s example illustrates how **we can help others find the One they’re truly seeking**. For that to happen, we must be...

I. Personally and Closely Connected with God

- A. Our relationship with God must be one of *trust* and *obedience*—
v.26-27, *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...*
- B. God often leads with no agenda of “What’s next?” (He may only give us *the next step* [like Peter Strachan’s song: “One Step at a Time”]).
- C. The closer to God, the easier we hear Him. [Remote-controlled cars must both be *switched on* and be *in range*; when out of range, *the car stops*. (To receive guidance, we must be both close to God and listening, or we get out of spiritual range, and we’re on our own.)]

TRANS: *How do we learn to listen to God?* One way is in a *daily quiet time*. Expect to hear His voice in reading *the Bible* or *devotional works*. Anticipate hearing Him speak, as you *meditate* on *His creation*. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me.” To *follow Him*, we must *practice good listening skills with our spiritual ears*. We must also be...

II. Responsive to God’s Ongoing Leading

- A. We must be already “on the way,”—*already* obeying His leading.
- B. It’s not as much about the destination as it is about the *journey*—
v.27a, *So he started out* [toward Gaza], and on his way he met an Ethiopian...
- 1. *Gaza* seemed the logical objective, but focusing on a *destination or goal* may distract us from God’s purpose for our journey.

2. God brings many situations into our lives where He might want us to share our faith in Christ. So, we must be listening....
- C. What attitude best keeps us open to being led of the Lord? IS IT
 1. A destination focus? "Someday, I'll be more prepared, have better Bible knowledge, have my house more presentable to guests, be a more spiritual person, THEN I can share my faith." (A "someday" vision may never see that day come.) **OR IS IT**
 2. A journey focus? "What's God saying now? Where's He leading me today? Whom must I touch at this point in my journey?" (In a "today" vision, real possibilities are before us in the present!)

TRANS: The Lord wants to lead us daily, and all day long. If Philip had said, "It's too hot, so I think I'll rest today and go tomorrow," he would have missed the Ethiopian. If he had said, "Gaza's far off, so I'll hurry my pace!" he might have rushed past him. Meeting a person was his real destination, not Gaza. If we don't pay attention to our journey with God, we may run ahead or lag behind His leading for us to get...

III. Near and Connected with Non-Christians

- A. To influence people, we have to be willing to move closer to them – v.29, The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."
- B. Jesus led the way in moving closer to people— Mk 2:16-17, When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
- C. How do we connect with people who don't know Christ?
 1. Jesus said, "Go..."—visit their turf (Some people may never come to church, unless the church first pays a visit to them.)
 2. Listen to their questions, before giving your answers AND listen for God's leading before trying to answer those questions!
 3. Discover people's specific needs (Christ's perspective gives us a general overview of people's needs— Mat 9:36, When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.") **HOW ARE THEY...**
 - a. "harassed" – by normal physical trials of life, by emotional hurts and bitter thoughts, by spiritual darkness and despair.
 - b. "helpless" – they're without the benefits of Christian faith &

- fellowship, and missing prayer's power in their lives.
- c. "without a shepherd" – they are unable to say the 23rd Psalm and really mean it: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."

TRANS: By being connected with God, responsive to His leading, and close to people, we can help them find the One they truly seek. This Ethiopian eunuch was seeking, but was stumped. When Philip's own journey intersected with this stranger's journey, Philip was led to...

IV. Simply Tell the Good News

- A. If that seems not so simple, start with a simple prayer: "Lord, let me know what to say, how to say it, and the right time to say it."
- B. Jesus often began His approach with a question, and so did Philip— v.30, "Do you understand what you are reading?"
 1. If God leads us to share Christ with people, He's already been at work with them. (Philip "heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.")
 2. At the place where God brings people on their personal journey is where we can bring Christ to them— v.35, Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.
- C. People can be tripped up and stalled out as they journey toward finding **the One they are really seeking**, but there's no area in all of creation that cannot become a starting point for introducing "the good news about Jesus"— Col 1:16, For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

CONCLUSION:

—God is often involved in the way our journeys run across those of others. And when we do share our faith, the results aren't up to us—we never know how God will use it. [Tradition says that this Ethiopian eunuch was responsible for founding the church in his own land.]

—Philip's story exemplifies being available and obedient to God. It's in the book of Acts for a reason: Jesus the Shepherd isn't finished using the sheep He's found to reach the sheep still lost. But, as sheep, we must stay close to the Shepherd, sensitive to His leading, and open to other people, looking for opportunities to help them find the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Whom they are really looking for.