

The Ethiopian

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[0:00] We've been going through the book of Acts. We've been talking about, hey, it's really fun to gather, but wouldn't it even be better to scatter? We are all recipients, we are all blessed by people who scattered! To share the gospel out of their own comfort zone.

And we all acknowledge that we don't leave our own comfort zones because we like it, because it's what? It's comfortable. And so the only way that we start to really get pushed out of our comfort zones is if we are pushed, pushed out.

It's okay. I promise you it's more painful out here for these people. Let me gather my thoughts.

So last week the church was being persecuted. People were being dragged out of their homes into prisons. And then Philip goes into enemy territory, into Samaria, and he preaches the gospel and he brings joy.

And that was just a great example of just that heart to be willing to scatter. I don't care. You can take me out of my home. You can take me out of my comfort zone, but I'm going to go somewhere else. And I'm going to keep sharing the gospel.

[1:08] And I'm going to keep bringing the good news of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ to wherever I go. And it was just this incredible story. And then it made me think, well, what about us here?

Maybe you're sat here going, okay, I like to go to church. Okay, I want to scatter. What does that look like for me? Because actually I hear stories about people, actually we're going to find out today, and it's one of my favorite stories, about someone who gets guided, literally spoken to by God and say, hey, go here and then speak this.

And wouldn't we all love that? Love that kind of just specific instruction as to where to go, where to scatter, and where to share the good news. And we wish we had that.

And we see today that Philip has this. But let me tell you, actually, we can have this too. But there are some requirements to having the instructions from God like Philip did, and, well, some prerequisites.

First of all, you have to be like Philip and choose to follow in Jesus when the whole of society was trying to persecute you. So if you can do that, then you're on to step one. After that is when you are willing to leave your own home and go, then that is a good start.

[2:17] And then after that, you're willing to go into places that are incredibly uncomfortable, like Samaria. If you're willing to do that and still share the gospel and still be relentless at sharing the gospel, then that's good.

And then when you get there, you will allow the power of God to work through you to bring healing and to bring joy into the city. If you're willing to do all of those things and be confronted by people who are against you, who are threatening to throw you into prison, if you are willing to do all those things, then maybe you, me, like Philip, will also get the instruction that comes from God in such a way.

I just wish it's this story that we're about to read is fascinating. God speaks to him and tells him to go somewhere to do something very specific. And then once he does it, God zaps him, zaps him and he just goes into a different place.

I just think, oh God, can you just make it easy for me when I scatter? I've heard these stories where you tell someone, hey, go to this place, stand on this street corner, and there will be someone in a red t-shirt.

Tell them about this. I wish I had that. Do you? And yet, very often, I'm unwilling to do what Philip did, to stand up against the current beliefs in society, willing to go out of my comfort zone, willing to start moving even through persecution.

[3:35] And I find that actually God likes to guide cars that are moving. He doesn't seem to really want to guide cars that are stationary, that aren't willing to move.

And so my prayer is that as we read this next story, again, one of my favorites, it's, actually, God, how does this apply to me? How do I live? How do I get in on this kind of action? This is exciting. This is fun.

And we're going to read it. And I'm going to actually invite Caleb to come and read it for us. So as always, can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? Amen. Today's passage is from Acts chapter 8, verses 26 to 40.

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. And he rose and went.

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 and was returning, seated in his chariot and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

[4:37] And the spirit said to Philip, Go over and join this chariot. So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading?

And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 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. And his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth. And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this? About himself or about someone else?

Then Philip opened his mouth and began, beginning with the scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water.

[5:33] What prevents me from being baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 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 he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself in Azotus, and as he passed through and preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

This is the word of the Lord. Praise be to God. Please take a seat. Thank you, Caleb. That's a really nice voice. That's like a radio voice. It reminded me when I was jet-lagged and I needed to go to sleep, so I'd turn on my Bible app and listen to just the Bible, and it was a voice like that.

Okay. We found your spiritual gift. Okay. So if you sum up this whole book, if it's like, hey, I'm too lazy to read the whole thing or I'm too forgetful to remember the whole thing, what is it?

You boil it all down. It's the first commandment. It's the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Love. And then the Great Commission. So the Great Commandment and then the Great Commission. If I was to boil everything down, and the Great Commission is, go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.

[6:46] The word nations actually can be translated also ethnicities. It's go to the whole world and share the gospel. I asked someone yesterday, hey, what does it mean to be a disciple for you?

And he said, well, actually, next month I'm going to Cambodia. I'm actually going to share the gospel there. It's going to wherever there are people. And where there are people, there is a need for the good news. And that's what it is.

But that often sounds quite big, right? We're called to go save the world. This story, today's story, tells us actually, when we talk about going to share the gospel, it's not really running the best program to go and save the world necessarily.

It really boils down to just people-on-people conversation. It boils down to personal evangelism. Are we willing to have these conversations with the people that God has placed around us to share the good news of Jesus?

That's all it is. And what I'm here to show you today is that this passage is fascinating because of the two people that are involved. First, Philip, and second, the Ethiopian. And I want to break this down for you.

[7:44] And I found this just a fascinating, fascinating story. Verse 26 says this. So, just remember, Philip's been pushed out of his own home and out of his city, goes to Samaria and keeps sharing

the gospel.

That's where he is. And then he goes to convert just a whole bunch of people. Simon the mystician is involved. And then he carries on. And he's growing a ministry among Samaritans.

In Samaria. And this is exciting. He's like, God, these people. These people that the Jews usually don't like. But now, they're accepting God. And they're accepting Christ. How incredible is that?

He's growing a ministry.

He might even have a gathering. They might also need to move into a new property because they're starting to get full. And then the angel of the Lord, at that moment, tells him, 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.

In that moment, when things are going well, when his ministry is growing, God tells him, now I want you to leave. This does not make sense. This does not make sense.

[8:46] And he has to walk a long time to get to this next place. And just in case that we didn't really understand what this place was, Luke here tells us, verse 26, this is a desert place.

So he's got a ministry that is growing in Samaria. And yet God says, hey, pause, one sec, I need you to go and I need you to go to a desert place. It doesn't make sense at all.

But what does he do? Straight away, and he rose and went. There was just this obedience that he has. He had to walk 40 miles. Can you imagine what he was thinking during these 40 miles? But God, do you remember the Simon, the magician?

Do you look at all these people that need the gospel? Why don't you want me to stay there? And yet his heart for scattering just remains. He only has really one goal, and that is to follow and pursue God's call, to be obedient.

And so he goes to the desert place. And then from there, I just wonder, can you see, I hope it's not lost on you. When we talk about scattering, we're really talking about just us obeying whatever God wants us to do.

[9:48] The book of Acts, if you look at the title in your Bible, the book of Acts is called the Acts of the Apostles. If I was to change it, it would be the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

Because really, it's all the Holy Spirit.

So if you're here wondering, oh, I don't know. I don't know about scattering. I don't know how it's going to work. I don't know what to say. Then actually, my encouragement to you is actually just let God lead you. You just have to obey.

And at some point, you'll have to open your mouth, which is what Philip does, but you just have to obey and let him guide you. For those of us who are the surfers in our community here, I've loved that analogy.

That when you are going to scatter, it is like surfing. You cannot create the waves by yourself. All you can do is catch that taxi to Big Wave Bay with your board and then just go into the water.

And then you're still waiting for nature to do its thing. And only then are you able to surf. Sharing the gospel, scattering is really the same.

[10:47] Just are we obedient? Are we willing? Is it really, is really all it takes? Even when it doesn't make sense. Even when we are taken to desert places, that walk for 40 miles that Philip would have had to take, it would be like, I don't understand.

I don't, where am I going? Just do a random place between Jerusalem and Gaza just to stand there. What do you want me to do, God? But God says, please go.

And then he meets someone. He meets someone that's very, very interesting. And I want to tell you a bit about this person. And verse 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.

This is what, unpacking this character is one of my favorite things to do. Because you look and go, well, I don't know if I can relate with an Ethiopian eunuch. And yet, if you just listen just for the next 10, 15 minutes, this captivated my heart as I was looking at this person and why he was there at that moment and why God told Philip to go to him is just fascinating.

It blew my mind and I hope it blows yours. But if you've heard me say this then, actually, every time I share this, I get excited because I just love what this story represents. And so he sees this. And remember, it's the Holy Spirit that's doing all of it.

[12:07] And he meets, and there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. Ethiopia, okay? That time it was called, it actually is modern-day Sudan.

It was a very wealthy place with iron mining. And so this person was actually a very important person. And later you see a court official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

So they were in, this country was in charge of iron smelting and gold mining, and this person was in charge of all the treasure. This was the CFO of Ethiopia. He was that important.

The other thing is, he was a eunuch, which means his body was altered, okay? Just a bit of context there. If you were to reach such a level in government, you had to, most of the time, be family.

If you were not family, and you were just a commoner rising through the ranks, working your way up to be the CFO of this government, you would have had to basically get castrated. Why?

[13:06] Because the families wouldn't trust you. Because they couldn't trust this person that you wouldn't take over the country. So in order for you to get to that place, in order for this person to get to that place, he would have had to sacrifice a lot.

And just before you think, well, okay, I don't know if I know any people who are in that same position. Well, do you know people in Hong Kong who have, because of their careers, sacrificed family? Because of their ambitions to get to the top, to become the CFO, that actually they have left their family and left the things that are important behind?

That's this person. He's given everything that he can to climb up to the top and now he is at the top. Isn't that just interesting? And of course, he was Ethiopian, but he was also going to Jerusalem, which means he was a Gentile convert to Judaism.

Okay? So he was someone who wasn't a Jew, but had committed to becoming a Jew and now wanted to go to Jerusalem to worship. Ethiopian, making this journey about a thousand miles. So one way, this would have taken about two, three months. CFO of Ethiopia, in charge of all the queen's finances, having given up everything, including his own family and his own future, travels for two, three months to go to Jerusalem to worship.

[14:22] What would he have had to say to his government, to his colleagues, to his queen that he's doing? Why did he want to travel all the... He would have had to take in a sabbatical.

It would have had to be no pay leave. It would have to be extended leave. Why? I think it's because this guy is spiritually dissatisfied. He has everything that he could ever want.

He's given up everything to get to where he is, to be the CFO, to have all the power and to have all the wealth. And yet there was still something missing. What triggers someone to have everything and yet still leave their jobs for nearly up to six months to go on this pilgrimage because they are searching?

For something. Have you met people in Hong Kong who have given up family to pursue career, to get everything that they thought they wanted, only to get to the top and realize it wasn't what they thought it was?

Have you met those kinds of people? I have. Isn't it fascinating as even just as we understand this story about why he's going to Jerusalem?

[15:26] Interesting. Something else that's interesting. He's reading. Not many people in those days could read. What's he reading?

He's reading a scroll. Do you have a scroll? I don't have a scroll. This guy's an important person. He also cared enough. Not only could he read but he wanted to read this. This person who has everything, who's given up a lot to get there is now dissatisfied and takes an extended break from work.

Can you imagine how he would explain this to his colleagues in Ethiopia? And of course, not part of the family, he could risk his own job. He could come back six months later and actually we've replaced you. We realized that actually we didn't need you as CFO.

He risked everything. Gave up everything to go on this journey. The story continues to go. And so Philip walks, was basically probably waiting on this desert road, waiting for the next instruction. And then, here he goes, verse 29 says this. And the spirit said to Philip, go over and join this chariot. Again, God, I wish you would speak to me like this.

[16:37] Stand on the road, wait, and then as you see this chariot, hey, go over there. And so he goes and he walks over. He probably had to break into a light jog to keep up with the chariot. And so I can just imagine this just funny moment where he's like just jogging along the chariot and then peeks into the window.

Hey, hey, can I help you? Do you, and actually, so he sees, maybe in his first jump, he sees he's reading. Second jump, he sees, oh, it's the prophet Isaiah. Oh, interesting. I remember that one. And then, hey, do you understand what you're reading?

And then this line, I think is so packed, given the context to what I'm about to share with you. He says this, do you understand what you're reading? And he said, how can I, unless someone guides me?

Well, that's a little bit passive aggressive, Mr. Ethiopian eunuch. Why? I mean, he's just a friendly guide waiting for you in the desert. Why are you suddenly all aggressive about this?

Well, he's on his way back from Jerusalem. See, the thing about this Ethiopian eunuch that maybe I didn't understand before was he had everything. He gave up a lot. He was spiritually dissatisfied, which took him on this journey where he said, I've got everything now and it still doesn't satisfy me. [17:46] He gets to Jerusalem, but I think he only, he gets there and he realizes something that actually he's not allowed in the temple. Deuteronomy 23 says this and explicitly says no emasculated male could be included within the Jewish community.

There is an incredibly, incredibly high chance that this man travels 1,100 miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, gets there, takes the no pay leave, spends three months traveling there, gets there, gets to the door, gets to the temple and then it gets turned around.

So now I'm like, okay, now you have a right to be passive aggressive because he's heading home and he's like, what do I do? I don't even, the one place I thought I might find some satisfaction where I thought I might find some answers, they won't let me in.

So he's on his way home and then this random guy is jumping up and down going, do you understand? He's like, of course I don't understand. How can I understand unless someone guides me?

And what's he reading? The passage that he's reading I think is actually important and let me just read it to you again, verse 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.

[19:07] In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation for his life is taken away from earth. And the eunuch said to Philip, about whom I ask you does the prophet say this?

About himself or about someone else? He's looking at this passage and going, now we're not supposed to read the Bible like this but I'm sure you and I have all done this before. You look at the Bible and you read something and you're like, well that sounds like me.

You can see yourself in the Bible but that's not really the point of the Bible. The point is that you see Jesus in scripture but often we're looking at, I think that's me. I've just been humiliated.

Justice was denied me. And so he goes and he asks Philip, who's this talking about? Now where's this passage? It's Isaiah 53. It's where we hear about the suffering servant.

It's where we hear about the man of sorrows. It's the prophet Isaiah prophesying Jesus who is to come, who is going to be pierced for our transgressions. And he's reading this and he doesn't understand.

[20:06] I mean, I think we can all empathize with that when we're reading the prophet Isaiah. We're looking at it like, nope, who is this? I have no idea. But can you feel the pain of just the context? This is probably month four now of him taking this step away from work to do this and he's on his way home without any answers.

He's like, what is this? Who is this? Now, weird man, as you pop and ask me, do I understand? The answer is no. And no one's willing to explain it to me.

How am I supposed to learn if no one teaches me? This tells me something else, a slight tangent, which is we need people around us to help us. This man was incredibly intellectual.

How did he get to where he was without being intellectual? Right? So he was incredible. He could have said, Philip, hey, all good. I'm going to figure this out myself. I'm going to read this Bible.

I'm going to find some commentaries. I'm going to understand who this is. But no, he says, I need help. We all need to be in a place sometimes where we go, I need help. I need help.

[21:07] I'm looking at the scripture and I don't truly understand what it means. I'm looking at the scripture. Now I've understood what it means and I actually don't know how to apply it. I think, I hope, I pray, that's why we're here.

Together. Not because I have all the answers but because here we can ask questions together and get to a place that maybe we can start to understand a little bit more about what it means to be a believer of Christ and to be a follower of Christ.

We need people. Yes, I know AI is pretty good at answering deep apologetics questions. It's pretty good. Use it. But my encouragement to you is use it in community.

Use it with people because you look at some of those answers and you're like, oh, I don't know if that's true. What do you think? Don't do it on your own. Don't head down these rabbit holes on your own. We all need someone.

And then Philip opened his mouth. I love that. Verse 35, he says, and he opens his mouth and told him the good news about Jesus. Basically what he's doing is he's explaining to him the gospel.

[22:09] When he's saying, well, Mr. Ethiopian, Mr. CFO, clearly you have a lot of money. If I may, I can tell you that actually this person, this person who was led like a lamb to slaughter, this person who was humiliated and denied justice, may feel like you, but actually it was Jesus.

And he's explaining this to him that actually, again, what he does is he spreads the gospel. He preaches the good news. What's the bad news that the Ethiopian is going through?

The Ethiopian is thinking, well, I'm dissatisfied, I am dejected, and now I'm rejected. I'm cast out. I'm cut off from the Jewish community. But my people that I came from also now are going to think I'm weird because I've decided that the things that we're pursuing in Ethiopia are also not worth it.

So there is no hope. So that's his bad news. And then Philip comes in with the good news, which is, hey, there was someone who was cast out, who was cut off for you and I.

And because of that, we are now allowed in. You don't need to go into Jerusalem, into a temple, because now you are forever eternally accepted by a community of Christ followers.

[23:21] Can you feel the good news coming through? Like, you tried this. You've tried everything in the world. You're now trying this and you still got rejected. But let me tell you, Christ came to preach peace to you, you who were far off.

And now you are brought close and now you have access to the Father through his spirit. That would have been such good news. And the penny drops in that moment for the Ethiopian. He's like, okay. And then it's funny.

He says this. 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? And he commanded the chariot to stop. So you can see the penny drops.

He's like, I get it now. I get it now that there was someone who was actually cast off in my place, a substitute that put it into my place so that I can now have access. Stop the chariot.

Shut the front door. Who can stop me from getting baptized? That's what he's saying. He's like, those people who stopped me from getting into the temple before, you can't stop this because I now have some good news because Jesus Christ came and tore that veil and now I can have access straight to the Father through him.

[24:26] What is going to stop me from getting baptized? And Philip's like, I don't know, nothing I guess. When you have lived with bad news all of your life, when you have been dissatisfied and have been pursuing through all kinds of means and when you finally understand the gospel which is, I don't need to prove myself to people anymore.

I am deeply loved. I am a child of God. That moment, the lights come on and you're like, I just need to commit to him. It's interesting, Isaiah 50.

Of course, when he was reading it wasn't through an app because he was more serious about the Bible than that. But it wasn't also through this where it was kind of pages.

It was through a scroll. Right? And so actually, what's really fascinating is, and this is me just imagining a little bit but also still using the word of God. Isaiah 53 is talking about the man of sorrows.

It's talking about 53 verse 4. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows and yet he was esteemed, him stricken, yet smitten by God and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions.

[25:36] He was crushed for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray. Verse 7. He was oppressed He was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth. Can you imagine? The Ethiopian would have arrived at that temple being rejected and he couldn't say a thing.

So he's just wondering who is this person? Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth. As he was looking and opening this

scroll of Isaiah 53 I can't help but imagine that he would have glanced down and seen Isaiah 56 because it would have been the same line of sight and if you just peek later into Isaiah 56 the title and I'm getting goosebumps even as I imagine him reading this and him seeing this in his line of sight the title of that bit at least for us now is Salvation for Foreigners.

And it reads this Thus says the Lord Keep justice and do righteousness for soon my salvation will come and my righteousness be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who holds it fast who keeps the Sabbath not profaning it and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Here we go Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say the Lord will surely separate me from his people and let not the eunuch say behold I am a dry tree for thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

You can bet that Philip used Isaiah 56 to explain to him Isaiah 53. He's like Ethiopian man I know what you've sacrificed to get to where you're at.

[27 : 16] I know that you're looking at your life now and go everything about it is just vapor in the wind it's just mist it's not satisfied you but you also know that you now have no hope because you won't have children your name will not be passed on but I'm here to tell you some good news that salvation is not just for the Jews in fact salvation is exactly for the people who are on the fringe who have been cut off by society.

Salvation is for you and because of Jesus that's the good news my friend because of Jesus you now will have a name within my walls better than sons and daughters and I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

Can you imagine how he would have wrestled with this for the whole of his life as a eunuch saying what you're saying you're saying that I will have a name that will last forever. Man I don't have children and I will never be able to have children and yet you're saying here that I can.

They turn me away and you're here saying that there's a savior there's a Christ who came to me instead. Isn't that just mind blowing?

Isn't that earth shattering? Isn't that life changing? He says I have been a dry tree that's what it says right Isaiah 56 and let not the eunuch say behold I am dry tea and the eunuch says I have been a dry tree for a very long time but now you opening up the scriptures to me you explaining that now I have access to the father and that I get to be his child and that I will my name will be for I completely understand now why he said stop the chariot baptize me now strange man I have no idea who you are but you've just opened my eyes to the Christ of course Philip was explaining to him that Jesus was the substitute that we as men and women have chosen our own way what we call that is sin and that when we chose our own way that way led us to death that led us to a path of destruction and we would never be allowed in the temple again the eunuch would have understood that for sure he lived it but then he who was without sin the sinless lamb was sacrificed became the substitute for us atoned for our sins atonement that beautiful word that I've said before atonement at one that we were once broken apart but now

[29 : 58] Christ has atoned and so now that we are at one atoned with God again that we are allowed in because Christ has now made his dwelling place in us that we are the temple the Ethiopian is a changed man can you imagine the joy and elation I personally believe it's at that moment the Ethiopian then goes back to Africa and then a whole wave of Christianity is born in Africa in 1900 there were 9 million Christians in Africa in the year 2000 100 years later it went from 9 million to 380 million the organization I was part of and still involved with Young Life is global so there's over 105 countries in the world the fastest growing continent Africa every time I've met someone or been to Africa and seen people who choose to follow

Christ they just give life bring life they just completely change my view of what Christianity should be someone who grew up in England whose village had a building at a church that had no one inside and you have this idea that Christianity is just for Western Europeans and then you go to somewhere like Africa and it completely smashes that out and you're like wow when Jesus said go therefore and make disciples of all nations all ethnicities because there is something beautiful that every culture every race brings to the kingdom of God that all are welcome even eunuchs even CFOs that brothers and sisters is the good news I'll finish with these quotes John Stott says this the story of Philip and the Ethiopian is a striking example of personal evangelism Philip was sensitive to the spirit's guidance the Ethiopian was receptive to the scriptures meaning and both were

responsive to the gospel's demands can we heed that call that actually it doesn't take much it just takes us being obedient being sensitive to the spirit's guiding hey that person speak to that person have the courage at the office just to hey how are you doing how can

I pray for you and that's all it requires and you'll be shocked and you'll I'll tell you why you'll be shocked and surprised because I love asking people how can I pray for you and I usually meet Christians and they're like oh that's refreshing I'm like that's Christians I think we as a church have lost the art of praying for one another after a conversation after a lunch and coffee hey actually as we finish honestly it's a great way to finish a lunch as well hey how can I pray for you why don't we do that even as a church why don't we do that to people who actually don't know God who actually are in deep need of prayer because they are also on that journey that the Ethiopian eunuch was on climbing up sacrificing getting to the top and realizing there's nothing there we can be that right so when you're having lunch with someone or when you're talking to someone in your home or at your workplace why don't you ask God hey is there anything you want me to do here do you need me to open my mouth that's what

Philip did and something else that tells you is that no one no one is too far no one is too far from the gospel so next week we'll find out the murderer Saul is also not too far even an Ethiopian eunuch traveling a thousand miles will be reached by God we have a responsibility simply just to be obedient and to ride that wave follow the spirits leading and from there a desert road can turn into a place where God can dwell where a life can be completely changed one man Philip being obedient another man the Ethiopian being hungry and the kingdom of God moves isn't that incredible I hope that inspires you and finally there's something actually that makes me really like Philip and actually we don't hear much from him after this so he baptizes him and he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water

Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him and when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more can you imagine that scene this is straight from Harry Potter so he'll just baptize him and then the Ethiopian can you imagine just that moment how loved that Ethiopian would have felt that God I was rejected from a temple that I traveled so far to get and yet you would send someone to me in the desert to do this and then go and literally that would have been hammered home he's gone now that means it was specifically for me and it's funny Philip the one who gets zapped but Philip found himself at Azotus and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea so he does this and then he he's like I'm not on the desert road anymore I'm in Azotus and it's as if nothing crazy has happened he's like oh I guess

[35 : 35] I'll carry on and preach the gospel don't you want to have what don't you want to have what happened to Philip happened to you yes there are requirements and they are tough at the end of chapter seven and beginning of chapter eight but you can just see Philip's heart he's like oh that was cool but I've got something even more important I want to continue to preach the good news of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ and he just continues I love that heart whether he had a successful ministry in Jerusalem or whether he had one in Samaria he was willing to go to the desert and as soon as that was finished he continued on his way because he knew that there was something much bigger than all of those places I pray that we would be sensitive to the spirit in the same way I'm going to ask you just to bow your heads and close your eyes and just to spend a moment now just to ask in a bit we're going to take communion but before then I believe there are Philips in this room right now

I believe there are people who God is calling and saying just go to the desert place go to Samaria and open your mouth you don't have to be clever you don't have to be witty just open your mouth and be obedient and before even any music comes on I want you to ask this question Holy Spirit who are you leading me to who are you placing in front of me who have you already placed in front of me that I just need to open my mouth the kingdom of God spreads through people one man who stopped at nothing to obey his master another man deeply dissatisfied with anything the world could offer all pointing to the one man

God himself the prince of heaven who knew no sin allowing himself to be casted off humiliated denied justice so that many would receive the free gift of grace through him it's our job it's our only job to share the good news of Jesus if you have a name in your mind I'm going to ask you to do one thing I'm not going to embarrass you I'm not going to ask you I do that in other places but not here I just want to see a little bit of commitment from you if you have a name or God's given you someone

can you just show me that you have just your hand can you just raise it up I can sense there is someone thank you can I ask you to commit to putting yourself in front of that person and sharing the simple gospel with them and if you have trouble doing that or if you're not quite sure of that come and speak to me can you commit to sharing the gospel with that person you may think oh it's just one conversation it's just one person what can that do

I don't know I think God can do anything I think a whole nation can be saved through one conversation over coffee because it's not us who does it it's him can you commit to that person we're going to have communion passed around now as well as the ladies pass it around the story of the Ethiopian story of Philip is a story of being cast out whether Philip being pushed out of Jerusalem whether it's the Ethiopian being turned away yet I can think of no better thing to do as a community here many years later on the other side of the world we commit to sharing the one message that Christ shared with us that all are welcomed in don't get me wrong the gospel is exclusive only Jesus can only

Jesus is the way but is inclusive and that it is for everyone we thank you that when we were dead when we were separated when we had no hope you rich in mercy because of the great love you had for us the kindness the mercy that you had for us that you welcomed us in and now you have made your dwelling place here God would you continue to dwell in the praises of your people and as we scatter from here would we have the spirit of obedience that Philip had and we have the hunger that the Ethiopian Lord we commit to loving you with all our hearts all our mind to loving our neighbours as ourselves and to go and make disciples of all nations because you died and you rose again and all the authority in heaven and on earth has been given to you and so we go we also pray that the rain would disappear before volleyball thank you in your name we pray amen