

Today's Message

GETTING OUR ACTS TOGETHER

GCF Sermon Series on the Acts of the Apostles

#14: "Spirit-led Missions Networking"

Acts 8:26-40

By allowing persecution to scatter the Jerusalem Christians, God catalyzed the spread of the church to Samaria through Philip's ministry. Then while many conversions were happening in the cities, God directs Philip to the desert road to share the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch—the one person who signals the spread of the church "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Through this one person reached by one witness on this one instance, the church started and a network flourished in Ethiopia. Now in Africa, Ethiopia thrives as a "Christian island in the sea of Islam".

From our human perspective, we cite John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels and others and the millions of people they have influenced for Jesus. But supernaturally for each of them, one person was used of God to bring them to Jesus Christ. It follows that our witness to one person as in the case of Philip to the Ethiopian may have similar results. From his example, we cite these acts of the Spirit in effective witnessing.

1. Sometimes, the Spirit's instructions may not make sense even when they are clear, vv. 26-27a.
 - a. Philip was told to leave a very productive ministry in the city and go to a desert road.
 - b. From serving multitudes, Philip was told to minister to one person. Furthermore, he was needed to establish the new believers in their newfound faith.
 - The ways of God are often beyond human comprehension. Obedience requires believing God.
 - Ask God to make you sensitive to His leading to the right person and the right time to engage in witnessing. If you need help, ask God to lead you to a sharing and praying partner.
2. When the Spirit prepares a person's heart to seek after God, the barriers are removed, vv. 27b-28.
 - a. The Ethiopian went to Jerusalem to worship and presumably, to search for the truth. Distance did not matter: Ethiopia was at least 2000 kilometers away from Jerusalem.
 - b. Judaism was a foreign religion and the Old Testament was in a foreign language (Greek). Either this person had Jewish lineage or at least a proselyte—a Gentile who worships with the Jews.
 - c. As a eunuch, he was not allowed the full Jewish privileges (Deuteronomy 23:1).
 - God does not disappoint anyone who sincerely seeks after Him (Jeremiah 29:13).
 - Not everyone is as interested in the gospel and as ready to be saved as the eunuch. Even Jesus' witness was rejected by some (Luke 19:18-27).
3. The Spirit creates the situation, provides the right words and secures the right response, vv. 29-40.
 - a. The eunuch was reading Isaiah the prophet and asked Philip to help him understand it.
 - b. Beginning with Isaiah, Philip presented the good news about Jesus Christ presumably including repentance and faith and following the Lord in baptism.
 - God used Philip to explain the Word and yet today, some testify about being saved just by reading the Bible. Indeed the Word of God is alive and nothing is impossible with God.
 - Baptism is not necessary for salvation but it is not unimportant because Jesus commanded it.