

Sharing Your Faith – Part 3

Acts 8:25-40 • Panha M. Doeung

INTRODUCTION

We have been talking about how to share our faith with lost people. Two weeks ago we looked at a simple strategy called invest-and-invite. It is developing friendship and relationship with our family and friends in order to earn the right to be heard. As you invest, you look for opportunity to invite them to church and to the Person of Jesus. Then last week, we looked at how to prepare to share our faith through personal testimony and by being sensitive to people.

Today, I want to wrap up our series by looking at the most important aspect of sharing our faith.

Turn with me to Acts 8:25-40, and let's see what we can learn from God's Word.
(Read and pray)

LESSON

When we look at this chapter as a whole, the church was enduring severe persecution. Chapter 8 begins with Saul going from house to house persecuting Christians and throwing them in prison. As Christians are being persecuted, they scattered. But in their persecution, they continue to preach and proclaim the gospel everywhere they went.

One of the reasons the early church grew was because of persecution. People saw the fire and the passion in their eyes when they talked about the risen Lord and how their lives were changed. I wonder if our modern day affluent church needs to be persecuted in order to proclaim the gospel. Tertullian, an early church father, said, "The more we are cut down, the more we persist." He also said "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." (*Apologeticum*, 1) And we see places around the world like in China and the Middle East where the church thrive in reaching others because of persecution.

In our text, Philip was one of the persecuted. This is Philip, the evangelist, a lay person, one of the seven deacons chosen in Acts 6. We should not confuse him with Philip, one of Jesus' disciples. So instead of going into hiding, he went down from Jerusalem to preach a crusade in Samaria and the surrounding villages. And many

people believed and were baptized as a result of him preaching the good news of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

In v. 14, we find Peter and John joining Philip to pray for the new believers and for them to receive the Holy Spirit. And as they were heading back to Jerusalem, in v. 26, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip telling him to take a different road. As strange as it was, Philip didn't ask why. He just obeyed. Now this was a desert road leading to Gaza. Walking the desert road in the heat of the day is like committing suicide, but Philip obeyed.

There he met an Ethiopian eunuch. He was a court official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. We don't know the queen's name. Candace is a title like Pharaoh or Caesar (www.christiananswer.net). The king of Ethiopia sees himself like god, and doesn't do anything but sits around to be worshipped. Much of the governing is left to the queen and her court. So this eunuch belongs to the queen's inner circle with a VIP status. In fact, he was her treasurer. In today's term, he would be the Minister of Finance, a very important position. So this eunuch wasn't someone low on the totem poll. He was in a powerful position and in a place of influence. He wasn't someone traveling by foot or flying in a coach seat. He had an entourage and rode in a chariot. He had the Queen's private jet to take him places.

In v. 28, we know that this eunuch was seeking God. He was searching for God and for fulfillment in life that no money, power and influence could fill. His search took him 1,582 miles to Jerusalem to worship. (www.indo.com)

Did you know that it is possible to come to church for worship without knowing God? That's why we ask you to invite your friends to church and to discover what church is all about. Some of you enjoy coming here week after week. You enjoy serving, you enjoy the music, my great preaching (ha ha!), and the fellowship, but you have not decided to cross the line of faith. That's okay. Keep coming. Keep serving. We love having you here. When you are ready to step across, we will be here to help you.

Not only was this eunuch going home from worshipping, he was reading the Bible from the book of Isaiah, except he does not understand what he was reading. You can sense that he was hungry and desperately searching for God. And there are many people today who are searching for God, but in the wrong places. And you may be their only link to help them find God.

Then in v. 29 "the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.'" This is the second time he was directed by God. The first time an angel of the Lord told Philip to

take a different route, and now we see the Holy Spirit telling him to just go up to the chariot.

We have used various terms like “leading,” “guiding” and “directing” for the work of the Holy Spirit.

In sharing our faith, a term I like to use for how the Holy Spirit works is “prompting.” Prompting is like a reminder, a cue, a tug or a nudge. When someone prompts you, they are beside you and gently elbowing your side to look or to go or to do something. The Holy Spirit speaks by prompting us.

Philip was prompted by the Spirit to go up to the eunuch. “Just go and join the chariot.” It wasn’t something Philip thought of on his own. The Spirit whispers in his ear and puts the thought in his mind to go and walk beside the chariot.

Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit prompting you to go up to someone and just talk to them?

A few weeks ago, I was at Barnes & Noble working on a sermon. Now you know where I get my inspiration. It’s a strange place to do it but I get to watch people and by observing what they’re reading tells me what they’re interested in and what’s going on in their life. After a couple of hours with my head in my Bible, I decided to take a break and walk over to Starbucks next door. I saw this Asian couple and immediately I was drawn toward them. It’s weird, but when I see Asian people, I’m drawn to them. So I saw this couple, and something was telling me, “Go talk to them. Just talk to them.” This is really weird, right? You don’t just go up to strangers and started talking to them. My wife thinks I’m crazy. Just last week, we were driving and saw an Asian lady having a garage sale, and it was her (my wife) who suggested we get out and talk to the lady. And can you believe, she invited her to church and to the Family Life Conference? Anyway, this couple was sitting and drinking their frappuccino’s and having a good time. My heart was thumping. And I’m thinking, this is crazy. Finally, I muscled enough courage and went up to talk to them. In just a few minutes, I learned a lot about them. They were Vietnamese students attending UTSA from Houston. Have you noticed a lot of people from Houston are coming this way? So we talked about Houston for a while since I used to live in Houston. Then I asked what they were studying and learned that the boy wants to do medicine and become an anesthesiologist. That opened the door for me to tell him about my wife and to be a Resource Provider for him and to give us a call if he has any questions or need anything. I learned that they don’t attend church anywhere. Then I invited them to our church. I didn’t open my Bible and started telling them that they were sinners and

needed Jesus. I just invited them church. All I did was to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and went up to talk to them. Maybe I brought them one notch closer to the cross by letting them know that I was interested in them and that there is a church for them if they were interested.

Philip was prompted by the Holy Spirit to “go up and join the chariot.” Some of you may have felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to go and talk to someone, but you weren’t sure.

How do you know if the Holy Spirit is prompting you?

The Spirit’s prompting is not easy to define. Promptings are mystical. They are intangible, but they are real. Perhaps, the best way to explain the prompting or nudging of the Holy Spirit is Galatians 5:25. Paul encourages the believers and says, “if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” I like what the NIV says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

To keep in step with the Spirit is to do what the Spirit does. It is walking side by side with the Spirit and doing what He tells you to do. In sharing your faith with others, your objective is not to “close the deal”, but rather it is to walk when the Spirit prompts you to walk, talk when he says to talk, be quiet when you’re saying too much, and stay put when he tells you to stay put.

In your daily routine, the Holy Spirit may nudge you or prompt you to just go up and join someone. If you see someone sitting alone in the school cafeteria or in the break room, and something is telling you to go sit with them, it is likely the Holy Spirit prompting you. Maybe in a social gathering, the Spirit may prompt you to step out of your comfort zone and go and introduce yourself to a complete stranger and initiate a conversation. If the idea in your mind seems strange, weird, unthinkable, and illogical like Philip taking a desert road, it’s likely the work of the Holy Spirit. If you feel nervous and scared and your heart is pounding, it’s likely the Holy Spirit is nudging you.

If the Spirit is prompting you, don’t ignore Him. There is something incredible that develops inside of you when you know that you have heard God and have responded to Him in obedience. If you’re unsure, say a prayer, “Lord, is it you talking to me and trying to get my attention? If you really want me to go up to someone and talk to them, just help me and give me the strength and courage to do that. You’ll have to help me and help me say the right thing.”

Philip was prompted by the Spirit to walk up to the chariot. And instead of walking up to the chariot, he ran. Then he heard the eunuch reading the Bible. He was searching for God. And Philip must have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to ask, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

When the eunuch said, "how could I understand unless someone guides me?" Philip saw an open door and began to share the Gospel. Skip down to v.36. "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

It's similar to the jailer's question: "what must I do to be saved?" Isn't that a great question to be asked by someone you talk to? "What do I need to do?" "Why can't I be baptized?"

Some people question the need for baptism. Baptism is a command our Lord gave. Jesus himself was baptized by John the Baptist. If Jesus was baptized, then believers should do too. Baptism doesn't save you. It symbolizes your identity with the community of believers. It is an outward sign of your inward commitment to Christ.

In sharing our faith, when we lead people cross the line of faith, we need to also encourage them to get baptized and to get nurtured so they can grow in their faith.

I love Philip's reply, "If you believe with all your heart, you can." The eunuch professes his faith right there, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

CONCLUSION

Sharing your faith does not have to be difficult. It is simply leading people to say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And when they do that, they will cross over from the left side of the cross and into the right side and begin an incredible journey called Life.

Evangelism is simply keeping in step with the Holy Spirit and cooperating with Him to share the good news. When the Spirit prompts you to go, you go. When he prompts you to speak, you speak. When he says to stay put, you stay put. When he prompts you to serve, you serve.

Let me close with this. Do you know what the key to keeping in step with the Spirit and to hearing his prompting is? Prayer.

In Colossians 4, Paul, chained in prison, writes to encourage the believers by saying, “devote yourselves to prayer” and to pray for him so he can clearly proclaim the gospel even in prison. “Devote yourselves to prayer” simply means pray and pray often. Pray in the morning, pray at noon, pray at meal, pray at work, pray at night, pray before you study, pray before you play, pray when you’re sick and when you’re healthy, when you’re up, when you’re down, when you’re busy, when you’re bored.

In other places Paul tells his readers to pray continually and pray without ceasing. Could it be that the key to everything we do, especially sharing our faith, is prayer? If we ever hope to lead people to Christ, we have to be devoted to pray. As we pray, we are being drawn to the Person of God, to the Power of God and to being in tune with what He’s telling us and prompting us to do. Prayer is how we keep in step with the Spirit. Devote yourselves to prayer. And it is in prayer that you will have the power of the Holy Spirit and the boldness to share your faith with others.

Would you pray with me?

The Bible says that after the eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing. According to tradition, the eunuch’s first convert was Candace the queen of Ethiopia. When missionaries arrived in Ethiopia many years later, they found a thriving church started by this eunuch and possibly with the queen’s help.

You never know who you can reach for Christ and the influence they will have on others. When you learn to keep in step with the Spirit and respond to His prompting, you not only touch someone’s life for eternity, but you are part of God’s eternal work.