

How Far are we Willing to Follow God's Leading?

Acts 8:26-40 February 2, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 8²⁶ 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 the Kandake (which means "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 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

*"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its 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." (Isaiah 53:7, 8)

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.

³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"^{[37] 1}³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.²

¹ Some manuscripts include here *Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."*
The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

² *The New International Version.* (2011): Zondervan.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip,

"Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Acts 8:26

A. Philip

Last known location north of Jerusalem

Maybe heading home after eviction from Jerusalem?

B. The man with no name –

What does a lack of name suggest?

What was he reading?

What is his most distinguishing feature?

Ethiopian Αἰθίοψ (*Aithiops*) A Greek noun used only 2 times in the NT both here in Acts 8:27. Not modern Ethiopia but more likely south Egypt or Sudan. In the ancient world this was one of the 'ends of the earth'. This man is most certainly black and represents the continued reach of the Gospel of Jesus to all people both ethnically and geographically.

Eunuch εὐνοῦχος (*eunouchos*) A Greek noun used 8 times in the NT (3 times in Matthew 19:12 and then 5 times in Acts 8:27, 34, 36, 38, 39) It means eunuch, castrated male and can be used of a government official in some foreign jurisdictions of the day. Luke is a medical doctor trained in his era. He knows and deliberately uses terms with medical understanding.

Deuteronomy 23:1; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 54-56

C. Itineraries

The word of the Angel

Acts 8:26

To go in an unexpected direction and unexpected place

The word of the Spirit

Acts 8:29

To approach someone new and to listen carefully

2. The True Way

Acts 8:30-35

*"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?"
So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:31*

A. Obedience and Understanding

Acts 8:30, 31

Philip 'ran' – not a lot of running in the Bible

Philip knew what to do next

Explains ὁδηγέω (*hodēgeō*) A Greek verb used rarely in the NT (5 times in the NT and this once in Acts). It is a compound word with using word 'way' It has a narrow range of meaning from guide, lead, instruct, explain.

Translated: NIV, Explains; ESV, NASB, NKJV, KJV, Guides; NLT, Instructs

B. The Good News of Jesus

Acts 8:32-35

Isaiah 53 is a beautiful chapter that points to Jesus

3. Baptized along the Way

Acts 8:36-40

*As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said,
"Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" Acts 8:36*

A. A Sign of Faith in Jesus

Acts 8:36-38

Baptism – Confirming belief

B. Philip's Exit

Acts 8:39, 40

Sudden – may have been 'taken' to Azotus

How far do we follow God's leading?

Philip responds by heading in a different direction

When we have a clear leading or indication we should follow it. The more we listen the more we hear.

We should not expect to receive additional information unless we have been attentive to the previous information.

We should proceed with what seems reasonable and in line with God's word.

When we are in the right place or doing the right thing we may not receive guidance. We should proceed once we see the opening or opportunity. We might receive confirmation after the fact.

Study Questions

For your personal study or with family, a friend, mentor or Life Group

Beginning:

1. What insight, idea, question or principle from Sunday's message did you find most helpful, eye opening or troubling?
2. How have you experienced a unique leading from God to a specific place or circumstance?

Learning:

3. How does a guy from up north and on foot connect with a guy from the south and in a chariot?
4. There are some interesting OT parallels: Philip is addressed by an angel of the Lord (2 Ki. 1:15), moved by the Spirit (8:29, 39; cf. 1 Ki. 18:12), and runs down the road with the chariot of an important person (8:30; cf. 1 Ki. 18:46).
5. Look for the clues to the intention of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:27 and 28. There are three indicators of his hunger for God. The third is the rare personal possession of a book (hand written scroll) of the Bible.
6. Trace all the ways God has lead, directed or 'moved' Philip in this chapter. What do we learn about the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit? How was God at work in the Ethiopian Eunuch?
7. Read Deuteronomy 23:1; Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 54-56 with a view to chapter 56. How does the vision and hope of Isaiah 54-56 give hope to this man? How does Isaiah 53 provide the realization to the vision in chapters 54-56?
8. The message of Jesus is one of invitation and inclusion. Who would you consider to be the most difficult person in your life to reach?

Applying:

9. Read Isaiah 53:1-12 and note the vast number of connections this has with Jesus' death on the cross. Take some time to read this and pray.
10. When we look at how God has directed the paths of both Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch consider how God will bring you across the paths of others and how others will be brought across you path. How can you begin to develop a listening ear, an attentive eye and Holy Spirit sensitivity to His leading and directing?

Praying:

11. Pray that God would bring you across someone's pathway for the gospel. Pray that God will bring those who are near and dear to us across someone else's pathway.