

01-27-07

Acts 8 "The Ethiopian Eunuch"

Jerry Arnold

"Father in Heaven, we are about to open Your word. Wow, Your word is just as sacred and Holy as You are, grand and glorious, powerful, beyond human description. And yet Lord, we are seeking to understand You through this Word. So we pray humbly and happily that Your promises will be true and that You will be the One who will teach us. We pray now Heavenly Father for angels to fill this auditorium with an atmosphere of heaven. And we ask that You will move up and down the aisles and through the pews and into our hearts. And that You will speak the very, very words we need to hear. And we ask for miracles to take place. And we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Pastor Kevin and I have had a privilege of becoming acquainted and becoming very good friends with a Baptist minister. Pastor Dave meets with Kevin and me every week for our staff meetings. We divide it with two activities. First we walk 6 miles together, and then he goes and Kevin and I talk about church stuff and we have prayer together. It's a wonderful experience having that fellowship with a fellow minister who is pastoring in another denomination. He talks about his congregation and all their problems, and on and on, and we just rave about ours. And it's wonderful fellowship.

But interesting thing happened this last week on Thursday when we were meeting. As we were walking, and sharing, and talking, he said, you know years ago when people would talk to him about Seventh Day Adventist, when they would say something about Seventh Day Adventist, they would say something like this: "Oh yeah, they are the people that go to church on Saturday, and they are really health conscious, aren't they?" You know, that's not so bad. That's a lot better than some things I heard, how about you? But note, this is what they used to say. Do you know what they say now? And I am saying from him, these are the Baptist people that he is around. They say, "Oh, Seventh Day Adventists, oh yeah, they are the people with those billboards telling us we all have the mark of the beast because of Sunday."

Do you like being defined that way? That's a very small group, and really, they are not really Seventh Day Adventists in my impression. What a horrible, horrible witness, to be known as the people of the billboard! And yet, we want to be respected, we want to be used by God, we want to share Jesus Christ, but now, because of our silence in witness, we've been overcome by some kooks who've rented billboards. But witnessing man, that's oh, come on... We've tried living a good life. You know, you just live a good life, people will see that, you keep your lawn mowed and they'll come to Christ, you know. That's how it works. But I'm telling you, ask parents who've lost children when the parents have tried to live a good life but the children could care less about God. There's got to be more to it than that. Although I will tell you, nobody will care what we have to say if we aren't living a good life, right?

So living a good life isn't the totality of it. And then we think, well we have to share. We have to share Christ with other people. But all of our methodologies to share Christ with other people are primarily centered in the idea that we have to correct them. So the seminars we go to are lessons on how to correct people because they are wrong and they need to be corrected. They are wrong in this area, and in that area, and here is how I deal with that, and here is how I deal with this. And so consequently our witness, those of us who have seen people witness this way, we think,

oh, I don't want to be that way because it's like the person when they come around, everybody is saying, "Oh no, here they come again." And so because of the obnoxious behavior, and the words of some, most of us, we don't want to share because who wants to be obnoxious? Bad enough you have to deal with billboards now. Bad enough, we have all the differences we do, who wants to be considered obnoxious on the top of that?

However, Jesus said, "If you testify about Me before men, I'll testify about you before God." So what has happened to our witness? I don't want to be obnoxious, and I know you don't either. And yet, there is a compulsion within us, a desire that we will be used by God to win souls for eternity. Now, how do we do that? We've been studying through the Book of Acts. We've been learning that the experience of the first church is to be our experience here in these last days. Our study today is found in Acts chapter 8; I'd like to encourage you to turn there. Acts chapter 8 beginning with verse 26; we are reading the last part of the experience of Philip the evangelist. Philip, for those who have been reading from the Book of Acts right along with us, has just had a tremendous campaign. He's been in the region of Samaria preaching Jesus Christ, sharing the story of Jesus with whoever will listen. Miracles have been associated with his work, and my, what a revival has taken place.

Verse 26: "Now, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go toward the South along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, this is desert.'" This is a commission from heaven. Well, pull back the screen between the spiritual and the physical. And what you'll see is God in heaven, very, very concerned with the affairs of men. What they do, what they think, where they go, what they do, what their heart is all about? God very, very interested in us. Jesus came, died, was buried, rose again, went back to heaven, and He is not just sitting there on His laurels. He is actively engaged in what is going to happen to people on earth. And when you pull back the screen, you see angels at work. God calling over to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." And you just see that angel, just flying to the Lord as fast he can saying, "Oh Lord God Almighty, what every You want done, I will do for You." And He says, "Go down to earth and talk to Philip. Tell Philip I have a special message for him. I got a special program for him. I want him to go south from Jerusalem to Gaza, down towards the desert." And so the angel does, and Philip gets the message.

Verse 27: "So he arose and went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning." Philip is being sent by God to speak to this Ethiopian eunuch. Now Ethiopia, you know from your geography, is south of Egypt. It's in the upper Nile region. Nile runs north towards the Mediterranean. And this Ethiopian lives there. The Ethiopian is from Ethiopia, and he has been though to Jerusalem. He's called a eunuch. Now I've tried to contemplate the ages that are here. And so I am going to say what the dictionary says. If you are upset, you blame Webster. A eunuch is a castrated man. And children, just ask your parents.

This fellow worked in the palace with Candace who was queen. Now Candace is not her name, that is a title like Pharaoh was a title, or Caesar was a title. So he works there, he is an individual of great authority. He is in charged of the treasury. Now apparently back in those days it was not uncommon that people that were in high office were eunuchs. There was a high price to pay.

You know I wonder if we might have some better people serving if had a rule like that in our government, I don't know?

But this man went to Jerusalem to worship. Now if you were not Jewish, you fell into a couple of categories if you were there to worship. One would be, you were a proselyte. That would be a gentile who has accepted Judaism, has been circumcised, and is keeping the law. Another group was called, "God fearers." These were individuals who did not join, but loved to hear the Scriptures read and they were interested in the teachings. So this individual, this Ethiopian eunuch is in one of these two groups. He is either a proselyte or he is a God fearer.

Let me give you an idea of what his journey would have been like. If he had traveled 25 miles a day, it would have taken him depending on where he'd lived in Ethiopia, it would have taken him between 48 and 60 days to get to Jerusalem. Nearly two months to get to the worship service. And you thought it was hard getting here today? Then he would be there for a while and he would turn back for nearly four months for a round trip. This man sets out in order to worship God. Now we come to verse 28. It says, "He was returning and sitting in his chariot. He was reading Isaiah the Prophet." At great expense, this man would have purchased the scroll of Isaiah. These were written on parchments, and they were hand written. They would have been very, very costly.

So this man is interested. He is putting his money and his time into his interest. In verse 29 it says, "Then the spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot.'" Now let's go back to that curtain. You have God saying to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." That angel goes to Philip, and says: "Philip, God has something He wants you to do. Go south, down towards Gaza. There is somebody God wants you to meet." Now Philip has done that, he has found the man. In verse 28 it says, "God himself shows up." God himself shows up! I'll tell you brothers and sisters, God shows up in our lives all the time. We don't always see Him. We don't always have a sense of His presence. But He loves you far, far too much to not show up in your life. And the Spirit, God himself comes to direct the affairs of a soul that is about to be won. And God himself says, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

So Philip starts by being commissioned from an angel, now God himself is saying, "That's the chariot, go near that chariot. Overtake it!" The NIV says, "Stay near it." The New American Standard says, "Join this chariot" and the Amplified Version says, "Join yourself to this chariot." Now you are probably picturing in your mind a two-wheeled cart with horses and somebody, kind of stumbling along like that. This word "chariot" here, well, it's been translated into English as chariot, but in the Greek it could mean all manner of vehicles. It could be a wagon; it could be a cart, it could be a stage-coach – and so, this guy, this wealthy man, this high official is probably seated in a wagon with several benches of seats. Somebody is driving, and Philip goes near that chariot.

Verse 30: "Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah..." Philip drew near. He finds a man on a journey. He draws near. The man himself is seeking after God. The man himself is hungry, is hoping for something better. He is reaching out to God and God knows that. And that's why God is on the scene. So Philip comes alongside this man who is on the journey. In verse 30 it says, "Philip heard him." Philip begins to listen to him. And as he is walking

alongside this cart, he is listening, and he hears the man reading out loud. That's how they read back then. They always read out loud. And so, this gentleman is reading out loud, and Philip is listening, and Philip asked the question. "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Interesting response! The man says in verse 31: "How can I unless someone guides me?" This is the expression of a very humble individual. "How can I unless someone guides me?" I'll tell you, if you are new in reading the Bible, understand this. All of us had somebody teach us how to read the Bible. All of us had somebody who answered our questions. In fact, the longer I read the Bible, the more now I depend on other people helping me to understand the Bible than I did at the beginning. And if you are a person who no longer has the attitude, "How can I learn unless somebody teaches me," you may be in real spiritual trouble. You might be at the point where you are no longer a learner. I'll tell you, this book is so deep, so rich, and so amazing, we all have to sit at the feet of somebody to learn what its teachings are.

And what a blessing it is for those people who are married and they have a spouse who likes to read the Bible. Because if you are a normal couple, you are going to have differences of opinion and you will learn and grow from one another. You can have some healthy dialogue. You can have a few sparks that will sharpen you as to what do you think that means. And you'll realize, this is an exhaustible, wonderful book that we all learn from each other when we read.

So Philip comes alongside the man. Philip listens to the man and then Philip asks a simple question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the man says, "No, I don't have somebody to guide me." And then verse 31 it says, "He asked Philip to come up and sit with him." Now Philip is invited into the chariot. And Philip is there sitting with him, and Philip begins to converse with him. It says in verse 35: "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."

Now notice this. It's a simple process. Here is witnessing 101. Here is Philip empowered by God, told by an angel. He comes to a man who is on a journey. Do you know anybody who is on a journey? By the way, your life is a journey, is it not? We are on a journey, all of us. Individually, collectively, we are on a journey. And that journey has many strange twists, many strange turns, some hills and some downgrades, some fun and some sorrow. But all of us are on a journey. And everyone we come in contact with is on a journey. And God's method of witnessing and sharing His faith is to be close to the people that are close to you. Be near them; come alongside them on their journey.

Philip comes alongside them on their journey, and he does one thing. This is all he does. He listens. That's it. He listens! Now every program I've ever been to, to teach me how to share my faith, they never said, "Just come alongside somebody and listen." They've always told me what I am supposed to say. And generally, the idea is, you say it well enough, then they will listen. That didn't happen that way in the Bible. Philip came alongside this man who was on a journey, and he just listened. Do you realize brothers and sisters, the power there is in genuinely listening to another human being? They feel so valued by you to actually listen to them.

There is a story of a mother. She was a single mother, didn't have a lot of money, had just a little bit of money. And she had promised her daughter she was going to buy her a doll. And so they

went to Toys-R-Us, and the dolls were kind of arranged by price. And they had these dolls, very expensive dolls; they could do everything. In fact, more things than you wanted them to, they could do that. And so all along the way Mommy is pointing out dolls and little girl would say: “Mommy, what does that doll do?” “Well, this doll does this, and this doll does that.” “Oh, I’d like that doll Mommy.” But the mother couldn’t afford them, so she kept working down, working down, working down until she came to basically a bean bag with a nice had on it. And the mother said, “Oh, this is a nice doll.” And the little girl says, “Well, Mommy what does this doll do?” And the Mother said: “This doll will listen to you.” And the little girl says, “I’ll take that doll.”

Having someone listen to us, come alongside and listen to us. And then Philip simply asked a question: “Do you understand?” There are thousand questions that can be asked when you are listening. How are you going to get through this? Have you thought about this? Or, you ask the question. We are so, I don’t know, I want to say this in the kindest way I can. But the people who are paraded before us, the articles that are written that we are supposed to emulate; they don’t strike me as people that listen a whole lot. They are preaching whether the person is wanting to listen to them anyways. And we kind of think that’s the way we are supposed to be. But no! You listen to somebody and you find out where they are at, and you ask them a question. You don’t volunteer any information; you are asking them a question. “How are you going to get through this? Do you understand this? Life can be hard, oh I recognize that,” and with that question all of a sudden it is recognized with this individual, “Hey, this person cares. Come alongside me, come with me on the journey, sit with me.” And Philip sat with him. And as they went along, Philip heard more.

This is what he heard, verse 32. This place in the Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading from was from Isaiah. “He was lead as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken form the earth.” And the Eunuch says to Philip: “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” “I ask you!” Now Philip is being asked. And notice what the Scripture is saying, verse 35. “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.”

You see brothers and sisters, as you read the Gospel account of Jesus, as you read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and you read those little stories about Christ and how He did this and how He did that. Saturate your heart with those stories, and as you come alongside someone, as you listen to someone, as you inquire into their life, and as they ask you a question, I will tell you, God will bring to your mind a story from Jesus that applies to their situation. And you will be able to share with them Jesus Christ from that point, beginning at that point. And you can share Jesus with them.

Well the story goes on. Now remember while this is happening, who is there? God is there. God is there making the proper impression. And it says in verse 36: “Now as they went down the road, they cam to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me form being baptized?’” He wanted to be baptized. The New International Version doesn’t even have verse 37. And I am not going to take the time to explain to you why, but if you really, seriously want to know talk to me afterwards, and I’ll tell you why it’s not there in the NIV.

So we just come to verse 38. “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.” Now don’t get too excited about that. He wasn’t ruptured, he wasn’t whisked away, it wasn’t necessarily some miracle. It’s just an exciting way of Luke saying, “God was done with him there, and moved him off somewhere else.” So he moves on, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. He found Christ! He found what he was looking for, what he was searching for in his heart; it was Jesus Christ! Philip went away.

You know brothers and sisters; we find ourselves in this story one of two ways. We are either somebody who is searching. That the journey they are on in life right now is at the point where they need somebody to come alongside and help explain it. I recommend Jesus. And there are others who know the Lord, and you are wanting to be able to be that person who comes alongside another. I too recommend to you Jesus. Sharing Jesus! Not stuffing people full of opinions that are an attempt to correct them where they’re in error, but sharing the simple story of Jesus.

I want to challenge you. I want to ask you to begin praying every day. Begin praying every day that God would use you to lead someone to Jesus. He will if you avail yourself to Him. If you listen, if you humble yourself, if you walk carefully with God, He will lead you to someone that you can come alongside. Someone you can listen to, someone you can ask a question to, someone who will invite you into their life, and from that point you can teach them about Jesus. God will do that.

I am reminded of the story of a young Presbyterian Minister. He pastored a fairly large church, had an active congregation. And the most wonderful person in this congregation was a woman who was married to a man who didn’t go to church, didn’t care about church, didn’t give any money to the church. He didn’t hinder her, but church to him didn’t mean a thing. He was a wealthy man. He was living in an industrial town, and it was his industry that had built the town. He was a very powerful individual in that community. And this young Presbyterian Minister wanted to reach that man for Christ. He began praying for him. He prayed for him for several years, several years. And one day he got up, he just had that strong impression from God, “Today is the day! I need to go talk to this man about Jesus.”

So he made an appointment, went to see him, walked into this man’s office. The man was seated at this huge desk. This very austere individual, very powerful individual, and this young Presbyterian Pastor sat down in front of the desk and stared across this huge piece of wood at this austere, older gentleman. He began to share with him the simple story of Jesus Christ. And how Jesus died for humanity because of the sins of men, and that Jesus’ death gives life to those who receive Him. When he concluded, he asked this: “I think you ought to do something about this one way or the other.” The older gentleman just sat there staring at him, never said a word, just stared at him. Well the young Pastor was quite uncomfortable with that. He didn’t know what the fellow was thinking, he is thinking, “Oh boy, am I an idiot. Why did I come here?” But he is feeling the sense that he needs to go on. He is this far, so he shares the same story again, but he adds a little bit of information. And when he is done, he looks at the older gentleman, and the older gentleman is just staring at him. He is not twitching, he is not doing anything, he is just

staring at him. And this time the young man is thinking, "I wish I could die. I just wish I could melt right here into the woodwork and never be seen again. Why did I come, this is so foolish."

But being compelled by God, he shared the story again and asked, "I think you ought to do something about this, one way or the other." The older gentleman kept staring, but he pulled out a pan, grabbed a piece of paper and he wrote these words on it, and slid it to the man. "I am so deeply moved, I cannot speak." It was the first time anyone as an adult had talk to him about the Gospel and the simple claims of Jesus on his life. He gave his heart to Christ that day, became a powerful servant of the Lord, a leader in the church, and of course, he already was a leader in the community and it transcended there.

You see brothers and sisters, it may be your children, it may be your spouse, it may be other loved ones that you have or other family members, it may be a neighbor, it may be a work associate, but in your life right now someone is crying out to God. And God wants to use you to come alongside, to listen, to ask a question or two, to be invited into their life and to share Jesus with them. And today, you may be that person who needs to accept Christ. I am going to ask you to accept Him. He wants to come into your life. It's no accident that you are here; God knew you'd be here. He came to meet you here.

And some of you already know Jesus, but you would like to be used by Him. It's no accident you are here either. God wants to use you to lead souls to Christ. He cares for you and He cares for others. And so today if you would like to accept Christ or if you would like to invite Him into your life in a new, deeper, more meaningful way, I am going to ask you stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven today we thank you for Jesus our Savior. Today we ask as He comes into our hearts that He would be so real and so powerful in our lives, that You Lord will use us to come alongside others and lead them to You. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

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So Philip starts by being commissioned from an angel, now God himself is saying, "That's the chariot, go near that chariot. Overtake it!" The NIV says, "Stay near it." The New American Standard says, "Join this chariot" and the Amplified Version says, "Join yourself to this chariot." Now you are probably picturing in your mind a two-wheeled cart with horses and somebody, kind of stumbling along like that. This word "chariot" here, well, it's been translated into English as chariot, but in the Greek it could mean all manner of vehicles. It could be a wagon; it could be a cart, it could be a stage-coach – and so, this guy, this wealthy man, this high official is probably seated in a wagon with several benches of seats. Somebody is driving, and Philip goes near that chariot.

Verse 30: "Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah..." Philip drew near. He finds a man on a journey. He draws near. The man himself is seeking after God. The man himself is hungry, is hoping for something better. He is reaching out to God and God knows that. And that's why God is on the scene. So Philip comes alongside this man who is on the journey. In verse 30 it says, "Philip heard him." Philip begins to listen to him. And as he is walking

alongside this cart, he is listening, and he hears the man reading out loud. That's how they read back then. They always read out loud. And so, this gentleman is reading out loud, and Philip is listening, and Philip asked the question. "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Interesting response! The man says in verse 31: "How can I unless someone guides me?" This is the expression of a very humble individual. "How can I unless someone guides me?" I'll tell you, if you are new in reading the Bible, understand this. All of us had somebody teach us how to read the Bible. All of us had somebody who answered our questions. In fact, the longer I read the Bible, the more now I depend on other people helping me to understand the Bible than I did at the beginning. And if you are a person who no longer has the attitude, "How can I learn unless somebody teaches me," you may be in real spiritual trouble. You might be at the point where you are no longer a learner. I'll tell you, this book is so deep, so rich, and so amazing, we all have to sit at the feet of somebody to learn what its teachings are.

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So Philip comes alongside the man. Philip listens to the man and then Philip asks a simple question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the man says, "No, I don't have somebody to guide me." And then verse 31 it says, "He asked Philip to come up and sit with him." Now Philip is invited into the chariot. And Philip is there sitting with him, and Philip begins to converse with him. It says in verse 35: "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."

Now notice this. It's a simple process. Here is witnessing 101. Here is Philip empowered by God, told by an angel. He comes to a man who is on a journey. Do you know anybody who is on a journey? By the way, your life is a journey, is it not? We are on a journey, all of us. Individually, collectively, we are on a journey. And that journey has many strange twists, many strange turns, some hills and some downgrades, some fun and some sorrow. But all of us are on a journey. And everyone we come in contact with is on a journey. And God's method of witnessing and sharing His faith is to be close to the people that are close to you. Be near them; come alongside them on their journey.

Philip comes alongside them on their journey, and he does one thing. This is all he does. He listens. That's it. He listens! Now every program I've ever been to, to teach me how to share my faith, they never said, "Just come alongside somebody and listen." They've always told me what I am supposed to say. And generally, the idea is, you say it well enough, then they will listen. That didn't happen that way in the Bible. Philip came alongside this man who was on a journey, and he just listened. Do you realize brothers and sisters, the power there is in genuinely listening to another human being? They feel so valued by you to actually listen to them.

There is a story of a mother. She was a single mother, didn't have a lot of money, had just a little bit of money. And she had promised her daughter she was going to buy her a doll. And so they

went to Toys-R-Us, and the dolls were kind of arranged by price. And they had these dolls, very expensive dolls; they could do everything. In fact, more things than you wanted them to, they could do that. And so all along the way Mommy is pointing out dolls and little girl would say: “Mommy, what does that doll do?” “Well, this doll does this, and this doll does that.” “Oh, I’d like that doll Mommy.” But the mother couldn’t afford them, so she kept working down, working down, working down until she came to basically a bean bag with a nice had on it. And the mother said, “Oh, this is a nice doll.” And the little girl says, “Well, Mommy what does this doll do?” And the Mother said: “This doll will listen to you.” And the little girl says, “I’ll take that doll.”

Having someone listen to us, come alongside and listen to us. And then Philip simply asked a question: “Do you understand?” There are thousand questions that can be asked when you are listening. How are you going to get through this? Have you thought about this? Or, you ask the question. We are so, I don’t know, I want to say this in the kindest way I can. But the people who are paraded before us, the articles that are written that we are supposed to emulate; they don’t strike me as people that listen a whole lot. They are preaching whether the person is wanting to listen to them anyways. And we kind of think that’s the way we are supposed to be. But no! You listen to somebody and you find out where they are at, and you ask them a question. You don’t volunteer any information; you are asking them a question. “How are you going to get through this? Do you understand this? Life can be hard, oh I recognize that,” and with that question all of a sudden it is recognized with this individual, “Hey, this person cares. Come alongside me, come with me on the journey, sit with me.” And Philip sat with him. And as they went along, Philip heard more.

This is what he heard, verse 32. This place in the Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading from was from Isaiah. “He was lead as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken form the earth.” And the Eunuch says to Philip: “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” “I ask you!” Now Philip is being asked. And notice what the Scripture is saying, verse 35. “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.”

You see brothers and sisters, as you read the Gospel account of Jesus, as you read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and you read those little stories about Christ and how He did this and how He did that. Saturate your heart with those stories, and as you come alongside someone, as you listen to someone, as you inquire into their life, and as they ask you a question, I will tell you, God will bring to your mind a story from Jesus that applies to their situation. And you will be able to share with them Jesus Christ from that point, beginning at that point. And you can share Jesus with them.

Well the story goes on. Now remember while this is happening, who is there? God is there. God is there making the proper impression. And it says in verse 36: “Now as they went down the road, they cam to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me form being baptized?’” He wanted to be baptized. The New International Version doesn’t even have verse 37. And I am not going to take the time to explain to you why, but if you really, seriously want to know talk to me afterwards, and I’ll tell you why it’s not there in the NIV.

So we just come to verse 38. “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.” Now don’t get too excited about that. He wasn’t ruptured, he wasn’t whisked away, it wasn’t necessarily some miracle. It’s just an exciting way of Luke saying, “God was done with him there, and moved him off somewhere else.” So he moves on, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. He found Christ! He found what he was looking for, what he was searching for in his heart; it was Jesus Christ! Philip went away.

You know brothers and sisters; we find ourselves in this story one of two ways. We are either somebody who is searching. That the journey they are on in life right now is at the point where they need somebody to come alongside and help explain it. I recommend Jesus. And there are others who know the Lord, and you are wanting to be able to be that person who comes alongside another. I too recommend to you Jesus. Sharing Jesus! Not stuffing people full of opinions that are an attempt to correct them where they’re in error, but sharing the simple story of Jesus.

I want to challenge you. I want to ask you to begin praying every day. Begin praying every day that God would use you to lead someone to Jesus. He will if you avail yourself to Him. If you listen, if you humble yourself, if you walk carefully with God, He will lead you to someone that you can come alongside. Someone you can listen to, someone you can ask a question to, someone who will invite you into their life, and from that point you can teach them about Jesus. God will do that.

I am reminded of the story of a young Presbyterian Minister. He pastored a fairly large church, had an active congregation. And the most wonderful person in this congregation was a woman who was married to a man who didn’t go to church, didn’t care about church, didn’t give any money to the church. He didn’t hinder her, but church to him didn’t mean a thing. He was a wealthy man. He was living in an industrial town, and it was his industry that had built the town. He was a very powerful individual in that community. And this young Presbyterian Minister wanted to reach that man for Christ. He began praying for him. He prayed for him for several years, several years. And one day he got up, he just had that strong impression from God, “Today is the day! I need to go talk to this man about Jesus.”

So he made an appointment, went to see him, walked into this man’s office. The man was seated at this huge desk. This very austere individual, very powerful individual, and this young Presbyterian Pastor sat down in front of the desk and stared across this huge piece of wood at this austere, older gentleman. He began to share with him the simple story of Jesus Christ. And how Jesus died for humanity because of the sins of men, and that Jesus’ death gives life to those who receive Him. When he concluded, he asked this: “I think you ought to do something about this one way or the other.” The older gentleman just sat there staring at him, never said a word, just stared at him. Well the young Pastor was quite uncomfortable with that. He didn’t know what the fellow was thinking, he is thinking, “Oh boy, am I an idiot. Why did I come here?” But he is feeling the sense that he needs to go on. He is this far, so he shares the same story again, but he adds a little bit of information. And when he is done, he looks at the older gentleman, and the older gentleman is just staring at him. He is not twitching, he is not doing anything, he is just

staring at him. And this time the young man is thinking, "I wish I could die. I just wish I could melt right here into the woodwork and never be seen again. Why did I come, this is so foolish."

But being compelled by God, he shared the story again and asked, "I think you ought to do something about this, one way or the other." The older gentleman kept staring, but he pulled out a pan, grabbed a piece of paper and he wrote these words on it, and slid it to the man. "I am so deeply moved, I cannot speak." It was the first time anyone as an adult had talk to him about the Gospel and the simple claims of Jesus on his life. He gave his heart to Christ that day, became a powerful servant of the Lord, a leader in the church, and of course, he already was a leader in the community and it transcended there.

You see brothers and sisters, it may be your children, it may be your spouse, it may be other loved ones that you have or other family members, it may be a neighbor, it may be a work associate, but in your life right now someone is crying out to God. And God wants to use you to come alongside, to listen, to ask a question or two, to be invited into their life and to share Jesus with them. And today, you may be that person who needs to accept Christ. I am going to ask you to accept Him. He wants to come into your life. It's no accident that you are here; God knew you'd be here. He came to meet you here.

And some of you already know Jesus, but you would like to be used by Him. It's no accident you are here either. God wants to use you to lead souls to Christ. He cares for you and He cares for others. And so today if you would like to accept Christ or if you would like to invite Him into your life in a new, deeper, more meaningful way, I am going to ask you stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven today we thank you for Jesus our Savior. Today we ask as He comes into our hearts that He would be so real and so powerful in our lives, that You Lord will use us to come alongside others and lead them to You. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

01-27-07

Acts 8 "The Ethiopian Eunuch"

Jerry Arnold

"Father in Heaven, we are about to open Your word. Wow, Your word is just as sacred and Holy as You are, grand and glorious, powerful, beyond human description. And yet Lord, we are seeking to understand You through this Word. So we pray humbly and happily that Your promises will be true and that You will be the One who will teach us. We pray now Heavenly Father for angels to fill this auditorium with an atmosphere of heaven. And we ask that You will move up and down the aisles and through the pews and into our hearts. And that You will speak the very, very words we need to hear. And we ask for miracles to take place. And we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Pastor Kevin and I have had a privilege of becoming acquainted and becoming very good friends with a Baptist minister. Pastor Dave meets with Kevin and me every week for our staff meetings. We divide it with two activities. First we walk 6 miles together, and then he goes and Kevin and I talk about church stuff and we have prayer together. It's a wonderful experience having that fellowship with a fellow minister who is pastoring in another denomination. He talks about his congregation and all their problems, and on and on, and we just rave about ours. And it's wonderful fellowship.

But interesting thing happened this last week on Thursday when we were meeting. As we were walking, and sharing, and talking, he said, you know years ago when people would talk to him about Seventh Day Adventist, when they would say something about Seventh Day Adventist, they would say something like this: "Oh yeah, they are the people that go to church on Saturday, and they are really health conscious, aren't they?" You know, that's not so bad. That's a lot better than some things I heard, how about you? But note, this is what they used to say. Do you know what they say now? And I am saying from him, these are the Baptist people that he is around. They say, "Oh, Seventh Day Adventists, oh yeah, they are the people with those billboards telling us we all have the mark of the beast because of Sunday."

Do you like being defined that way? That's a very small group, and really, they are not really Seventh Day Adventists in my impression. What a horrible, horrible witness, to be known as the people of the billboard! And yet, we want to be respected, we want to be used by God, we want to share Jesus Christ, but now, because of our silence in witness, we've been overcome by some kooks who've rented billboards. But witnessing man, that's oh, come on... We've tried living a good life. You know, you just live a good life, people will see that, you keep your lawn moved and they'll come to Christ, you know. That's how it works. But I'm telling you, ask parents who've lost children when the parents have tried to live a good life but the children could care less about God. There's got to be more to it than that. Although I will tell you, nobody will care what we have to say if we aren't living a good life, right?

So living a good life isn't the totality of it. And then we think, well we have to share. We have to share Christ with other people. But all of our methodologies to share Christ with other people are primarily centered in the idea that we have to correct them. So the seminars we go to are lessons on how to correct people because they are wrong and they need to be corrected. They are wrong in this area, and in that area, and here is how I deal with that, and here is how I deal with this. And so consequently our witness, those of us who have seen people witness this way, we think,

oh, I don't want to be that way because it's like the person when they come around, everybody is saying, "Oh no, here they come again." And so because of the obnoxious behavior, and the words of some, most of us, we don't want to share because who wants to be obnoxious? Bad enough you have to deal with billboards now. Bad enough, we have all the differences we do, who wants to be considered obnoxious on the top of that?

However, Jesus said, "If you testify about Me before men, I'll testify about you before God." So what has happened to our witness? I don't want to be obnoxious, and I know you don't either. And yet, there is a compulsion within us, a desire that we will be used by God to win souls for eternity. Now, how do we do that? We've been studying through the Book of Acts. We've been learning that the experience of the first church is to be our experience here in these last days. Our study today is found in Acts chapter 8; I'd like to encourage you to turn there. Acts chapter 8 beginning with verse 26; we are reading the last part of the experience of Philip the evangelist. Philip, for those who have been reading from the Book of Acts right along with us, has just had a tremendous campaign. He's been in the region of Samaria preaching Jesus Christ, sharing the story of Jesus with whoever will listen. Miracles have been associated with his work, and my, what a revival has taken place.

Verse 26: "Now, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go toward the South along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, this is desert.'" This is a commission from heaven. Well, pull back the screen between the spiritual and the physical. And what you'll see is God in heaven, very, very concerned with the affairs of men. What they do, what they think, where they go, what they do, what their heart is all about? God very, very interested in us. Jesus came, died, was buried, rose again, went back to heaven, and He is not just sitting there on His laurels. He is actively engaged in what is going to happen to people on earth. And when you pull back the screen, you see angels at work. God calling over to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." And you just see that angel, just flying to the Lord as fast he can saying, "Oh Lord God Almighty, what every You want done, I will do for You." And He says, "Go down to earth and talk to Philip. Tell Philip I have a special message for him. I got a special program for him. I want him to go south from Jerusalem to Gaza, down towards the desert." And so the angel does, and Philip gets the message.

Verse 27: "So he arose and went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning." Philip is being sent by God to speak to this Ethiopian eunuch. Now Ethiopia, you know from your geography, is south of Egypt. It's in the upper Nile region. Nile runs north towards the Mediterranean. And this Ethiopian lives there. The Ethiopian is from Ethiopia, and he has been though to Jerusalem. He's called a eunuch. Now I've tried to contemplate the ages that are here. And so I am going to say what the dictionary says. If you are upset, you blame Webster. A eunuch is a castrated man. And children, just ask your parents.

This fellow worked in the palace with Candace who was queen. Now Candace is not her name, that is a title like Pharaoh was a title, or Caesar was a title. So he works there, he is an individual of great authority. He is in charged of the treasury. Now apparently back in those days it was not uncommon that people that were in high office were eunuchs. There was a high price to pay.



You know I wonder if we might have some better people serving if had a rule like that in our government, I don't know?

But this man went to Jerusalem to worship. Now if you were not Jewish, you fell into a couple of categories if you were there to worship. One would be, you were a proselyte. That would be a gentile who has accepted Judaism, has been circumcised, and is keeping the law. Another group was called, "God fearers." These were individuals who did not join, but loved to hear the Scriptures read and they were interested in the teachings. So this individual, this Ethiopian eunuch is in one of these two groups. He is either a proselyte or he is a God fearer.

Let me give you an idea of what his journey would have been like. If he had traveled 25 miles a day, it would have taken him depending on where he'd lived in Ethiopia, it would have taken him between 48 and 60 days to get to Jerusalem. Nearly two months to get to the worship service. And you thought it was hard getting here today? Then he would be there for a while and he would turn back for nearly four months for a round trip. This man sets out in order to worship God. Now we come to verse 28. It says, "He was returning and sitting in his chariot. He was reading Isaiah the Prophet." At great expense, this man would have purchased the scroll of Isaiah. These were written on parchments, and they were hand written. They would have been very, very costly.

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So we just come to verse 38. “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.” Now don’t get too excited about that. He wasn’t ruptured, he wasn’t whisked away, it wasn’t necessarily some miracle. It’s just an exciting way of Luke saying, “God was done with him there, and moved him off somewhere else.” So he moves on, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. He found Christ! He found what he was looking for, what he was searching for in his heart; it was Jesus Christ! Philip went away.

You know brothers and sisters; we find ourselves in this story one of two ways. We are either somebody who is searching. That the journey they are on in life right now is at the point where they need somebody to come alongside and help explain it. I recommend Jesus. And there are others who know the Lord, and you are wanting to be able to be that person who comes alongside another. I too recommend to you Jesus. Sharing Jesus! Not stuffing people full of opinions that are an attempt to correct them where they’re in error, but sharing the simple story of Jesus.

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I am reminded of the story of a young Presbyterian Minister. He pastored a fairly large church, had an active congregation. And the most wonderful person in this congregation was a woman who was married to a man who didn’t go to church, didn’t care about church, didn’t give any money to the church. He didn’t hinder her, but church to him didn’t mean a thing. He was a wealthy man. He was living in an industrial town, and it was his industry that had built the town. He was a very powerful individual in that community. And this young Presbyterian Minister wanted to reach that man for Christ. He began praying for him. He prayed for him for several years, several years. And one day he got up, he just had that strong impression from God, “Today is the day! I need to go talk to this man about Jesus.”

So he made an appointment, went to see him, walked into this man’s office. The man was seated at this huge desk. This very austere individual, very powerful individual, and this young Presbyterian Pastor sat down in front of the desk and stared across this huge piece of wood at this austere, older gentleman. He began to share with him the simple story of Jesus Christ. And how Jesus died for humanity because of the sins of men, and that Jesus’ death gives life to those who receive Him. When he concluded, he asked this: “I think you ought to do something about this one way or the other.” The older gentleman just sat there staring at him, never said a word, just stared at him. Well the young Pastor was quite uncomfortable with that. He didn’t know what the fellow was thinking, he is thinking, “Oh boy, am I an idiot. Why did I come here?” But he is feeling the sense that he needs to go on. He is this far, so he shares the same story again, but he adds a little bit of information. And when he is done, he looks at the older gentleman, and the older gentleman is just staring at him. He is not twitching, he is not doing anything, he is just

staring at him. And this time the young man is thinking, "I wish I could die. I just wish I could melt right here into the woodwork and never be seen again. Why did I come, this is so foolish."

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You see brothers and sisters, it may be your children, it may be your spouse, it may be other loved ones that you have or other family members, it may be a neighbor, it may be a work associate, but in your life right now someone is crying out to God. And God wants to use you to come alongside, to listen, to ask a question or two, to be invited into their life and to share Jesus with them. And today, you may be that person who needs to accept Christ. I am going to ask you to accept Him. He wants to come into your life. It's no accident that you are here; God knew you'd be here. He came to meet you here.

And some of you already know Jesus, but you would like to be used by Him. It's no accident you are here either. God wants to use you to lead souls to Christ. He cares for you and He cares for others. And so today if you would like to accept Christ or if you would like to invite Him into your life in a new, deeper, more meaningful way, I am going to ask you stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven today we thank you for Jesus our Savior. Today we ask as He comes into our hearts that He would be so real and so powerful in our lives, that You Lord will use us to come alongside others and lead them to You. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

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Acts 8 "The Ethiopian Eunuch"

Jerry Arnold

"Father in Heaven, we are about to open Your word. Wow, Your word is just as sacred and Holy as You are, grand and glorious, powerful, beyond human description. And yet Lord, we are seeking to understand You through this Word. So we pray humbly and happily that Your promises will be true and that You will be the One who will teach us. We pray now Heavenly Father for angels to fill this auditorium with an atmosphere of heaven. And we ask that You will move up and down the aisles and through the pews and into our hearts. And that You will speak the very, very words we need to hear. And we ask for miracles to take place. And we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Pastor Kevin and I have had a privilege of becoming acquainted and becoming very good friends with a Baptist minister. Pastor Dave meets with Kevin and me every week for our staff meetings. We divide it with two activities. First we walk 6 miles together, and then he goes and Kevin and I talk about church stuff and we have prayer together. It's a wonderful experience having that fellowship with a fellow minister who is pastoring in another denomination. He talks about his congregation and all their problems, and on and on, and we just rave about ours. And it's wonderful fellowship.

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Do you like being defined that way? That's a very small group, and really, they are not really Seventh Day Adventists in my impression. What a horrible, horrible witness, to be known as the people of the billboard! And yet, we want to be respected, we want to be used by God, we want to share Jesus Christ, but now, because of our silence in witness, we've been overcome by some kooks who've rented billboards. But witnessing man, that's oh, come on... We've tried living a good life. You know, you just live a good life, people will see that, you keep your lawn moved and they'll come to Christ, you know. That's how it works. But I'm telling you, ask parents who've lost children when the parents have tried to live a good life but the children could care less about God. There's got to be more to it than that. Although I will tell you, nobody will care what we have to say if we aren't living a good life, right?

So living a good life isn't the totality of it. And then we think, well we have to share. We have to share Christ with other people. But all of our methodologies to share Christ with other people are primarily centered in the idea that we have to correct them. So the seminars we go to are lessons on how to correct people because they are wrong and they need to be corrected. They are wrong in this area, and in that area, and here is how I deal with that, and here is how I deal with this. And so consequently our witness, those of us who have seen people witness this way, we think,

oh, I don't want to be that way because it's like the person when they come around, everybody is saying, "Oh no, here they come again." And so because of the obnoxious behavior, and the words of some, most of us, we don't want to share because who wants to be obnoxious? Bad enough you have to deal with billboards now. Bad enough, we have all the differences we do, who wants to be considered obnoxious on the top of that?

However, Jesus said, "If you testify about Me before men, I'll testify about you before God." So what has happened to our witness? I don't want to be obnoxious, and I know you don't either. And yet, there is a compulsion within us, a desire that we will be used by God to win souls for eternity. Now, how do we do that? We've been studying through the Book of Acts. We've been learning that the experience of the first church is to be our experience here in these last days. Our study today is found in Acts chapter 8; I'd like to encourage you to turn there. Acts chapter 8 beginning with verse 26; we are reading the last part of the experience of Philip the evangelist. Philip, for those who have been reading from the Book of Acts right along with us, has just had a tremendous campaign. He's been in the region of Samaria preaching Jesus Christ, sharing the story of Jesus with whoever will listen. Miracles have been associated with his work, and my, what a revival has taken place.

Verse 26: "Now, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go toward the South along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, this is desert.'" This is a commission from heaven. Well, pull back the screen between the spiritual and the physical. And what you'll see is God in heaven, very, very concerned with the affairs of men. What they do, what they think, where they go, what they do, what their heart is all about? God very, very interested in us. Jesus came, died, was buried, rose again, went back to heaven, and He is not just sitting there on His laurels. He is actively engaged in what is going to happen to people on earth. And when you pull back the screen, you see angels at work. God calling over to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." And you just see that angel, just flying to the Lord as fast he can saying, "Oh Lord God Almighty, what every You want done, I will do for You." And He says, "Go down to earth and talk to Philip. Tell Philip I have a special message for him. I got a special program for him. I want him to go south from Jerusalem to Gaza, down towards the desert." And so the angel does, and Philip gets the message.

Verse 27: "So he arose and went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning." Philip is being sent by God to speak to this Ethiopian eunuch. Now Ethiopia, you know from your geography, is south of Egypt. It's in the upper Nile region. Nile runs north towards the Mediterranean. And this Ethiopian lives there. The Ethiopian is from Ethiopia, and he has been though to Jerusalem. He's called a eunuch. Now I've tried to contemplate the ages that are here. And so I am going to say what the dictionary says. If you are upset, you blame Webster. A eunuch is a castrated man. And children, just ask your parents.

This fellow worked in the palace with Candace who was queen. Now Candace is not her name, that is a title like Pharaoh was a title, or Caesar was a title. So he works there, he is an individual of great authority. He is in charged of the treasury. Now apparently back in those days it was not uncommon that people that were in high office were eunuchs. There was a high price to pay.

You know I wonder if we might have some better people serving if had a rule like that in our government, I don't know?

But this man went to Jerusalem to worship. Now if you were not Jewish, you fell into a couple of categories if you were there to worship. One would be, you were a proselyte. That would be a gentile who has accepted Judaism, has been circumcised, and is keeping the law. Another group was called, "God fearers." These were individuals who did not join, but loved to hear the Scriptures read and they were interested in the teachings. So this individual, this Ethiopian eunuch is in one of these two groups. He is either a proselyte or he is a God fearer.

Let me give you an idea of what his journey would have been like. If he had traveled 25 miles a day, it would have taken him depending on where he'd lived in Ethiopia, it would have taken him between 48 and 60 days to get to Jerusalem. Nearly two months to get to the worship service. And you thought it was hard getting here today? Then he would be there for a while and he would turn back for nearly four months for a round trip. This man sets out in order to worship God. Now we come to verse 28. It says, "He was returning and sitting in his chariot. He was reading Isaiah the Prophet." At great expense, this man would have purchased the scroll of Isaiah. These were written on parchments, and they were hand written. They would have been very, very costly.

So this man is interested. He is putting his money and his time into his interest. In verse 29 it says, "Then the spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot.'" Now let's go back to that curtain. You have God saying to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." That angel goes to Philip, and says: "Philip, God has something He wants you to do. Go south, down towards Gaza. There is somebody God wants you to meet." Now Philip has done that, he has found the man. In verse 28 it says, "God himself shows up." God himself shows up! I'll tell you brothers and sisters, God shows up in our lives all the time. We don't always see Him. We don't always have a sense of His presence. But He loves you far, far too much to not show up in your life. And the Spirit, God himself comes to direct the affairs of a soul that is about to be won. And God himself says, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

So Philip starts by being commissioned from an angel, now God himself is saying, "That's the chariot, go near that chariot. Overtake it!" The NIV says, "Stay near it." The New American Standard says, "Join this chariot" and the Amplified Version says, "Join yourself to this chariot." Now you are probably picturing in your mind a two-wheeled cart with horses and somebody, kind of stumbling along like that. This word "chariot" here, well, it's been translated into English as chariot, but in the Greek it could mean all manner of vehicles. It could be a wagon; it could be a cart, it could be a stage-coach – and so, this guy, this wealthy man, this high official is probably seated in a wagon with several benches of seats. Somebody is driving, and Philip goes near that chariot.

Verse 30: "Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah..." Philip drew near. He finds a man on a journey. He draws near. The man himself is seeking after God. The man himself is hungry, is hoping for something better. He is reaching out to God and God knows that. And that's why God is on the scene. So Philip comes alongside this man who is on the journey. In verse 30 it says, "Philip heard him." Philip begins to listen to him. And as he is walking



alongside this cart, he is listening, and he hears the man reading out loud. That's how they read back then. They always read out loud. And so, this gentleman is reading out loud, and Philip is listening, and Philip asked the question. "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Interesting response! The man says in verse 31: "How can I unless someone guides me?" This is the expression of a very humble individual. "How can I unless someone guides me?" I'll tell you, if you are new in reading the Bible, understand this. All of us had somebody teach us how to read the Bible. All of us had somebody who answered our questions. In fact, the longer I read the Bible, the more now I depend on other people helping me to understand the Bible than I did at the beginning. And if you are a person who no longer has the attitude, "How can I learn unless somebody teaches me," you may be in real spiritual trouble. You might be at the point where you are no longer a learner. I'll tell you, this book is so deep, so rich, and so amazing, we all have to sit at the feet of somebody to learn what its teachings are.

And what a blessing it is for those people who are married and they have a spouse who likes to read the Bible. Because if you are a normal couple, you are going to have differences of opinion and you will learn and grow from one another. You can have some healthy dialogue. You can have a few sparks that will sharpen you as to what do you think that means. And you'll realize, this is an exhaustible, wonderful book that we all learn from each other when we read.

So Philip comes alongside the man. Philip listens to the man and then Philip asks a simple question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the man says, "No, I don't have somebody to guide me." And then verse 31 it says, "He asked Philip to come up and sit with him." Now Philip is invited into the chariot. And Philip is there sitting with him, and Philip begins to converse with him. It says in verse 35: "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."

Now notice this. It's a simple process. Here is witnessing 101. Here is Philip empowered by God, told by an angel. He comes to a man who is on a journey. Do you know anybody who is on a journey? By the way, your life is a journey, is it not? We are on a journey, all of us. Individually, collectively, we are on a journey. And that journey has many strange twists, many strange turns, some hills and some downgrades, some fun and some sorrow. But all of us are on a journey. And everyone we come in contact with is on a journey. And God's method of witnessing and sharing His faith is to be close to the people that are close to you. Be near them; come alongside them on their journey.

Philip comes alongside them on their journey, and he does one thing. This is all he does. He listens. That's it. He listens! Now every program I've ever been to, to teach me how to share my faith, they never said, "Just come alongside somebody and listen." They've always told me what I am supposed to say. And generally, the idea is, you say it well enough, then they will listen. That didn't happen that way in the Bible. Philip came alongside this man who was on a journey, and he just listened. Do you realize brothers and sisters, the power there is in genuinely listening to another human being? They feel so valued by you to actually listen to them.

There is a story of a mother. She was a single mother, didn't have a lot of money, had just a little bit of money. And she had promised her daughter she was going to buy her a doll. And so they

went to Toys-R-Us, and the dolls were kind of arranged by price. And they had these dolls, very expensive dolls; they could do everything. In fact, more things than you wanted them to, they could do that. And so all along the way Mommy is pointing out dolls and little girl would say: “Mommy, what does that doll do?” “Well, this doll does this, and this doll does that.” “Oh, I’d like that doll Mommy.” But the mother couldn’t afford them, so she kept working down, working down, working down until she came to basically a bean bag with a nice had on it. And the mother said, “Oh, this is a nice doll.” And the little girl says, “Well, Mommy what does this doll do?” And the Mother said: “This doll will listen to you.” And the little girl says, “I’ll take that doll.”

Having someone listen to us, come alongside and listen to us. And then Philip simply asked a question: “Do you understand?” There are thousand questions that can be asked when you are listening. How are you going to get through this? Have you thought about this? Or, you ask the question. We are so, I don’t know, I want to say this in the kindest way I can. But the people who are paraded before us, the articles that are written that we are supposed to emulate; they don’t strike me as people that listen a whole lot. They are preaching whether the person is wanting to listen to them anyways. And we kind of think that’s the way we are supposed to be. But no! You listen to somebody and you find out where they are at, and you ask them a question. You don’t volunteer any information; you are asking them a question. “How are you going to get through this? Do you understand this? Life can be hard, oh I recognize that,” and with that question all of a sudden it is recognized with this individual, “Hey, this person cares. Come alongside me, come with me on the journey, sit with me.” And Philip sat with him. And as they went along, Philip heard more.

This is what he heard, verse 32. This place in the Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading from was from Isaiah. “He was lead as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken form the earth.” And the Eunuch says to Philip: “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” “I ask you!” Now Philip is being asked. And notice what the Scripture is saying, verse 35. “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.”

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But interesting thing happened this last week on Thursday when we were meeting. As we were walking, and sharing, and talking, he said, you know years ago when people would talk to him about Seventh Day Adventist, when they would say something about Seventh Day Adventist, they would say something like this: "Oh yeah, they are the people that go to church on Saturday, and they are really health conscious, aren't they?" You know, that's not so bad. That's a lot better than some things I heard, how about you? But note, this is what they used to say. Do you know what they say now? And I am saying from him, these are the Baptist people that he is around. They say, "Oh, Seventh Day Adventists, oh yeah, they are the people with those billboards telling us we all have the mark of the beast because of Sunday."

Do you like being defined that way? That's a very small group, and really, they are not really Seventh Day Adventists in my impression. What a horrible, horrible witness, to be known as the people of the billboard! And yet, we want to be respected, we want to be used by God, we want to share Jesus Christ, but now, because of our silence in witness, we've been overcome by some kooks who've rented billboards. But witnessing man, that's oh, come on... We've tried living a good life. You know, you just live a good life, people will see that, you keep your lawn mowed and they'll come to Christ, you know. That's how it works. But I'm telling you, ask parents who've lost children when the parents have tried to live a good life but the children could care less about God. There's got to be more to it than that. Although I will tell you, nobody will care what we have to say if we aren't living a good life, right?

So living a good life isn't the totality of it. And then we think, well we have to share. We have to share Christ with other people. But all of our methodologies to share Christ with other people are primarily centered in the idea that we have to correct them. So the seminars we go to are lessons on how to correct people because they are wrong and they need to be corrected. They are wrong in this area, and in that area, and here is how I deal with that, and here is how I deal with this. And so consequently our witness, those of us who have seen people witness this way, we think,

oh, I don't want to be that way because it's like the person when they come around, everybody is saying, "Oh no, here they come again." And so because of the obnoxious behavior, and the words of some, most of us, we don't want to share because who wants to be obnoxious? Bad enough you have to deal with billboards now. Bad enough, we have all the differences we do, who wants to be considered obnoxious on the top of that?

However, Jesus said, "If you testify about Me before men, I'll testify about you before God." So what has happened to our witness? I don't want to be obnoxious, and I know you don't either. And yet, there is a compulsion within us, a desire that we will be used by God to win souls for eternity. Now, how do we do that? We've been studying through the Book of Acts. We've been learning that the experience of the first church is to be our experience here in these last days. Our study today is found in Acts chapter 8; I'd like to encourage you to turn there. Acts chapter 8 beginning with verse 26; we are reading the last part of the experience of Philip the evangelist. Philip, for those who have been reading from the Book of Acts right along with us, has just had a tremendous campaign. He's been in the region of Samaria preaching Jesus Christ, sharing the story of Jesus with whoever will listen. Miracles have been associated with his work, and my, what a revival has taken place.

Verse 26: "Now, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Arise and go toward the South along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, this is desert.'" This is a commission from heaven. Well, pull back the screen between the spiritual and the physical. And what you'll see is God in heaven, very, very concerned with the affairs of men. What they do, what they think, where they go, what they do, what their heart is all about? God very, very interested in us. Jesus came, died, was buried, rose again, went back to heaven, and He is not just sitting there on His laurels. He is actively engaged in what is going to happen to people on earth. And when you pull back the screen, you see angels at work. God calling over to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." And you just see that angel, just flying to the Lord as fast he can saying, "Oh Lord God Almighty, what every You want done, I will do for You." And He says, "Go down to earth and talk to Philip. Tell Philip I have a special message for him. I got a special program for him. I want him to go south from Jerusalem to Gaza, down towards the desert." And so the angel does, and Philip gets the message.

Verse 27: "So he arose and went. And behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning." Philip is being sent by God to speak to this Ethiopian eunuch. Now Ethiopia, you know from your geography, is south of Egypt. It's in the upper Nile region. Nile runs north towards the Mediterranean. And this Ethiopian lives there. The Ethiopian is from Ethiopia, and he has been though to Jerusalem. He's called a eunuch. Now I've tried to contemplate the ages that are here. And so I am going to say what the dictionary says. If you are upset, you blame Webster. A eunuch is a castrated man. And children, just ask your parents.

This fellow worked in the palace with Candace who was queen. Now Candace is not her name, that is a title like Pharaoh was a title, or Caesar was a title. So he works there, he is an individual of great authority. He is in charged of the treasury. Now apparently back in those days it was not uncommon that people that were in high office were eunuchs. There was a high price to pay.

You know I wonder if we might have some better people serving if had a rule like that in our government, I don't know?

But this man went to Jerusalem to worship. Now if you were not Jewish, you fell into a couple of categories if you were there to worship. One would be, you were a proselyte. That would be a gentile who has accepted Judaism, has been circumcised, and is keeping the law. Another group was called, "God fearers." These were individuals who did not join, but loved to hear the Scriptures read and they were interested in the teachings. So this individual, this Ethiopian eunuch is in one of these two groups. He is either a proselyte or he is a God fearer.

Let me give you an idea of what his journey would have been like. If he had traveled 25 miles a day, it would have taken him depending on where he'd lived in Ethiopia, it would have taken him between 48 and 60 days to get to Jerusalem. Nearly two months to get to the worship service. And you thought it was hard getting here today? Then he would be there for a while and he would turn back for nearly four months for a round trip. This man sets out in order to worship God. Now we come to verse 28. It says, "He was returning and sitting in his chariot. He was reading Isaiah the Prophet." At great expense, this man would have purchased the scroll of Isaiah. These were written on parchments, and they were hand written. They would have been very, very costly.

So this man is interested. He is putting his money and his time into his interest. In verse 29 it says, "Then the spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot.'" Now let's go back to that curtain. You have God saying to an angel, "Come here, I've got something I want you to do." That angel goes to Philip, and says: "Philip, God has something He wants you to do. Go south, down towards Gaza. There is somebody God wants you to meet." Now Philip has done that, he has found the man. In verse 28 it says, "God himself shows up." God himself shows up! I'll tell you brothers and sisters, God shows up in our lives all the time. We don't always see Him. We don't always have a sense of His presence. But He loves you far, far too much to not show up in your life. And the Spirit, God himself comes to direct the affairs of a soul that is about to be won. And God himself says, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

So Philip starts by being commissioned from an angel, now God himself is saying, "That's the chariot, go near that chariot. Overtake it!" The NIV says, "Stay near it." The New American Standard says, "Join this chariot" and the Amplified Version says, "Join yourself to this chariot." Now you are probably picturing in your mind a two-wheeled cart with horses and somebody, kind of stumbling along like that. This word "chariot" here, well, it's been translated into English as chariot, but in the Greek it could mean all manner of vehicles. It could be a wagon; it could be a cart, it could be a stage-coach – and so, this guy, this wealthy man, this high official is probably seated in a wagon with several benches of seats. Somebody is driving, and Philip goes near that chariot.

Verse 30: "Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah..." Philip drew near. He finds a man on a journey. He draws near. The man himself is seeking after God. The man himself is hungry, is hoping for something better. He is reaching out to God and God knows that. And that's why God is on the scene. So Philip comes alongside this man who is on the journey. In verse 30 it says, "Philip heard him." Philip begins to listen to him. And as he is walking

alongside this cart, he is listening, and he hears the man reading out loud. That's how they read back then. They always read out loud. And so, this gentleman is reading out loud, and Philip is listening, and Philip asked the question. "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Interesting response! The man says in verse 31: "How can I unless someone guides me?" This is the expression of a very humble individual. "How can I unless someone guides me?" I'll tell you, if you are new in reading the Bible, understand this. All of us had somebody teach us how to read the Bible. All of us had somebody who answered our questions. In fact, the longer I read the Bible, the more now I depend on other people helping me to understand the Bible than I did at the beginning. And if you are a person who no longer has the attitude, "How can I learn unless somebody teaches me," you may be in real spiritual trouble. You might be at the point where you are no longer a learner. I'll tell you, this book is so deep, so rich, and so amazing, we all have to sit at the feet of somebody to learn what its teachings are.

And what a blessing it is for those people who are married and they have a spouse who likes to read the Bible. Because if you are a normal couple, you are going to have differences of opinion and you will learn and grow from one another. You can have some healthy dialogue. You can have a few sparks that will sharpen you as to what do you think that means. And you'll realize, this is an exhaustible, wonderful book that we all learn from each other when we read.

So Philip comes alongside the man. Philip listens to the man and then Philip asks a simple question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the man says, "No, I don't have somebody to guide me." And then verse 31 it says, "He asked Philip to come up and sit with him." Now Philip is invited into the chariot. And Philip is there sitting with him, and Philip begins to converse with him. It says in verse 35: "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."

Now notice this. It's a simple process. Here is witnessing 101. Here is Philip empowered by God, told by an angel. He comes to a man who is on a journey. Do you know anybody who is on a journey? By the way, your life is a journey, is it not? We are on a journey, all of us. Individually, collectively, we are on a journey. And that journey has many strange twists, many strange turns, some hills and some downgrades, some fun and some sorrow. But all of us are on a journey. And everyone we come in contact with is on a journey. And God's method of witnessing and sharing His faith is to be close to the people that are close to you. Be near them; come alongside them on their journey.

Philip comes alongside them on their journey, and he does one thing. This is all he does. He listens. That's it. He listens! Now every program I've ever been to, to teach me how to share my faith, they never said, "Just come alongside somebody and listen." They've always told me what I am supposed to say. And generally, the idea is, you say it well enough, then they will listen. That didn't happen that way in the Bible. Philip came alongside this man who was on a journey, and he just listened. Do you realize brothers and sisters, the power there is in genuinely listening to another human being? They feel so valued by you to actually listen to them.

There is a story of a mother. She was a single mother, didn't have a lot of money, had just a little bit of money. And she had promised her daughter she was going to buy her a doll. And so they



went to Toys-R-Us, and the dolls were kind of arranged by price. And they had these dolls, very expensive dolls; they could do everything. In fact, more things than you wanted them to, they could do that. And so all along the way Mommy is pointing out dolls and little girl would say: “Mommy, what does that doll do?” “Well, this doll does this, and this doll does that.” “Oh, I’d like that doll Mommy.” But the mother couldn’t afford them, so she kept working down, working down, working down until she came to basically a bean bag with a nice had on it. And the mother said, “Oh, this is a nice doll.” And the little girl says, “Well, Mommy what does this doll do?” And the Mother said: “This doll will listen to you.” And the little girl says, “I’ll take that doll.”

Having someone listen to us, come alongside and listen to us. And then Philip simply asked a question: “Do you understand?” There are thousand questions that can be asked when you are listening. How are you going to get through this? Have you thought about this? Or, you ask the question. We are so, I don’t know, I want to say this in the kindest way I can. But the people who are paraded before us, the articles that are written that we are supposed to emulate; they don’t strike me as people that listen a whole lot. They are preaching whether the person is wanting to listen to them anyways. And we kind of think that’s the way we are supposed to be. But no! You listen to somebody and you find out where they are at, and you ask them a question. You don’t volunteer any information; you are asking them a question. “How are you going to get through this? Do you understand this? Life can be hard, oh I recognize that,” and with that question all of a sudden it is recognized with this individual, “Hey, this person cares. Come alongside me, come with me on the journey, sit with me.” And Philip sat with him. And as they went along, Philip heard more.

This is what he heard, verse 32. This place in the Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading from was from Isaiah. “He was lead as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken form the earth.” And the Eunuch says to Philip: “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” “I ask you!” Now Philip is being asked. And notice what the Scripture is saying, verse 35. “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.”

You see brothers and sisters, as you read the Gospel account of Jesus, as you read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and you read those little stories about Christ and how He did this and how He did that. Saturate your heart with those stories, and as you come alongside someone, as you listen to someone, as you inquire into their life, and as they ask you a question, I will tell you, God will bring to your mind a story from Jesus that applies to their situation. And you will be able to share with them Jesus Christ from that point, beginning at that point. And you can share Jesus with them.

Well the story goes on. Now remember while this is happening, who is there? God is there. God is there making the proper impression. And it says in verse 36: “Now as they went down the road, they cam to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me form being baptized?’” He wanted to be baptized. The New International Version doesn’t even have verse 37. And I am not going to take the time to explain to you why, but if you really, seriously want to know talk to me afterwards, and I’ll tell you why it’s not there in the NIV.

So we just come to verse 38. “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.” Now don’t get too excited about that. He wasn’t ruptured, he wasn’t whisked away, it wasn’t necessarily some miracle. It’s just an exciting way of Luke saying, “God was done with him there, and moved him off somewhere else.” So he moves on, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. He found Christ! He found what he was looking for, what he was searching for in his heart; it was Jesus Christ! Philip went away.

You know brothers and sisters; we find ourselves in this story one of two ways. We are either somebody who is searching. That the journey they are on in life right now is at the point where they need somebody to come alongside and help explain it. I recommend Jesus. And there are others who know the Lord, and you are wanting to be able to be that person who comes alongside another. I too recommend to you Jesus. Sharing Jesus! Not stuffing people full of opinions that are an attempt to correct them where they’re in error, but sharing the simple story of Jesus.

I want to challenge you. I want to ask you to begin praying every day. Begin praying every day that God would use you to lead someone to Jesus. He will if you avail yourself to Him. If you listen, if you humble yourself, if you walk carefully with God, He will lead you to someone that you can come alongside. Someone you can listen to, someone you can ask a question to, someone who will invite you into their life, and from that point you can teach them about Jesus. God will do that.

I am reminded of the story of a young Presbyterian Minister. He pastored a fairly large church, had an active congregation. And the most wonderful person in this congregation was a woman who was married to a man who didn’t go to church, didn’t care about church, didn’t give any money to the church. He didn’t hinder her, but church to him didn’t mean a thing. He was a wealthy man. He was living in an industrial town, and it was his industry that had built the town. He was a very powerful individual in that community. And this young Presbyterian Minister wanted to reach that man for Christ. He began praying for him. He prayed for him for several years, several years. And one day he got up, he just had that strong impression from God, “Today is the day! I need to go talk to this man about Jesus.”

So he made an appointment, went to see him, walked into this man’s office. The man was seated at this huge desk. This very austere individual, very powerful individual, and this young Presbyterian Pastor sat down in front of the desk and stared across this huge piece of wood at this austere, older gentleman. He began to share with him the simple story of Jesus Christ. And how Jesus died for humanity because of the sins of men, and that Jesus’ death gives life to those who receive Him. When he concluded, he asked this: “I think you ought to do something about this one way or the other.” The older gentleman just sat there staring at him, never said a word, just stared at him. Well the young Pastor was quite uncomfortable with that. He didn’t know what the fellow was thinking, he is thinking, “Oh boy, am I an idiot. Why did I come here?” But he is feeling the sense that he needs to go on. He is this far, so he shares the same story again, but he adds a little bit of information. And when he is done, he looks at the older gentleman, and the older gentleman is just staring at him. He is not twitching, he is not doing anything, he is just

staring at him. And this time the young man is thinking, "I wish I could die. I just wish I could melt right here into the woodwork and never be seen again. Why did I come, this is so foolish."

But being compelled by God, he shared the story again and asked, "I think you ought to do something about this, one way or the other." The older gentleman kept staring, but he pulled out a pan, grabbed a piece of paper and he wrote these words on it, and slid it to the man. "I am so deeply moved, I cannot speak." It was the first time anyone as an adult had talk to him about the Gospel and the simple claims of Jesus on his life. He gave his heart to Christ that day, became a powerful servant of the Lord, a leader in the church, and of course, he already was a leader in the community and it transcended there.

You see brothers and sisters, it may be your children, it may be your spouse, it may be other loved ones that you have or other family members, it may be a neighbor, it may be a work associate, but in your life right now someone is crying out to God. And God wants to use you to come alongside, to listen, to ask a question or two, to be invited into their life and to share Jesus with them. And today, you may be that person who needs to accept Christ. I am going to ask you to accept Him. He wants to come into your life. It's no accident that you are here; God knew you'd be here. He came to meet you here.

And some of you already know Jesus, but you would like to be used by Him. It's no accident you are here either. God wants to use you to lead souls to Christ. He cares for you and He cares for others. And so today if you would like to accept Christ or if you would like to invite Him into your life in a new, deeper, more meaningful way, I am going to ask you stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven today we thank you for Jesus our Savior. Today we ask as He comes into our hearts that He would be so real and so powerful in our lives, that You Lord will use us to come alongside others and lead them to You. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."