

Good News to Share #2

Acts 8 v 26-40

Context:

Dan Holland from Through Faith Missions preached at St James recently and commented that for many of us as Christians the thought of sharing the good news about Jesus with others fills us with dread and fear and we might be tempted to run in the opposite direction as fast as we can! However, everyone who becomes a follower of Jesus does so because, at some point in their life, they heard the Gospel, which means someone had the courage to overcome their fear, open their mouth and tell them about Jesus! The encouraging thing is that mission is ultimately God's business – He takes the initiative and then invites us to partner with Him, being obedient to the sovereign promptings of the Holy Spirit. We see this in our Bible passage today where we learn much about the vital importance of listening to God and following His lead.

Observation:

1. From whom did Philip receive his orders (v 26)?
2. Where was he told to go (v 26)?
3. Who did he meet on the way (v 27)?
4. Where had this man been and what was he doing as he travelled home (v 27b-28)?
5. Who then spoke to Philip and what was he told to do (v 29)?
6. What did Philip ask the man and what was his reply (v 30-31)?
7. What passage of Scripture was the man reading and what did he want to know (v 32-34)?
8. What was Philip's response (v 35)?
9. How did the encounter end (v 36-38)?
10. What then happened to Philip and to the Ethiopian (v 39-40)?

Meaning:

1. Both an angel of the Lord (v 26) and the Holy Spirit (v 29) were involved in directing Philip. What means do you think were used to actually communicate with Philip (i.e. *how* did the angel and the Spirit speak and how did Philip hear?).
2. How might *we* 'hear' God speaking to *us* and directing *us* to share our faith with others?
3. What might hinder or stop us being obedient to God's directing? How can we overcome these obstacles?
4. God goes to great lengths to *specifically* direct Philip to travel to the *exact place* where he would meet the Ethiopian at the *exact moment* he was reading a prophetic passage from the Bible about Jesus' saving death on the cross. What does this tell us about how God feels towards those who don't know Jesus yet, and what can we learn here about the sovereignty of God in evangelism and salvation?
5. The Ethiopian had questions about the Bible that he wanted answers to. What kinds of questions do those who are not yet Christians have today?
6. Philip was ready to give an answer to the Ethiopian's questions. How do you think he knew what to say? How can you be prepared to answer questions about the Bible in general and about Jesus in particular that may be asked of you?
7. The passage from Isaiah that the Ethiopian was reading was a prophecy about the suffering and death of Jesus. Why is the cross of Jesus at the heart of the good news that we have to

share? (see Romans 5 v 6-8, 1 Corinthians 1 v 21-25, Galatians 3 v 13, Colossians 1 v 19-23, 1 John 4 v 9-10)

8. v 35 tells us that Philip began with that passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. What other biblical passages do you think he may have referred to in the conversation? If you had been Philip, how would you have told him the good news, what would you have said, which passages of Scripture would you have referred to?
9. The Ethiopian is immediately baptised. Why is baptism such an important response to hearing the good news? Are you surprised that Philip had no qualms in baptising this man so quickly, without any baptism preparation classes!?
10. How do you think the Ethiopian's life may have changed as a result of his encounter with Philip that day?

Application:

1. How can you be more aware and sensitive to the prompting of God's Spirit to share your faith? Can you give any examples of when this has happened for you?
2. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5 v 14: *'For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all'*. We see this in the lengths Philip went to in order to share the good news with the Ethiopian. How does God's love for those who don't yet know Jesus compel us to share the good news with others?
3. Is there someone God is nudging you to speak to about Jesus – in your family, at work, at school? What will you do?
4. What can you learn from Philip's experience to help and encourage you in sharing your faith?

Pray:

- For those you know who don't yet know Jesus and for courage to speak to them.
- For God to prepare you to know what to say when you have the opportunity to speak about Jesus.
- For God to prepare them to hear you when you speak and to respond in faith and repentance.