

One-on-One in the Desert

Acts 8:26-40

Good Morning

Dr. Tony Beam said in a Christian Post Column, “*Sports are considered to be 'team sports', but at times sports come down to a one-on-one matchup.*

When a quarterback drops back to pass, looking for the open receiver, football becomes a one-on-one sport between the quarterback and the receiver.

The same is true for baseball. It takes all 9 players in the field for a game to happen, but at times, the outcome of the game comes down to a one-on-one between a pitcher and a batter.”

Evangelism is a team effort that should involve every member of the Body working together to see the lost come to Christ.

But no matter how many people come out to an evangelistic event, sometimes evangelism comes down to a one-on-one encounter between a Christian and a non-believer.

Please open your Bible to ***Acts 8...***

Last week, we learned about Simon’s self-serving request to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We learned that as Christ Followers, we can easily deceive ourselves and live in selfish pursuits while thinking we are serving the LORD.

The motives and intents of the heart regarding the choices we make must be clearly understood, so we must examine ourselves and ask why we are doing what we are doing.

Today, we are going to continue in the ***Book of Acts*** and learn about Philip's one-on-one encounter with a seeker in the desert.

I. One-on-One Evangelism

Read ***Acts 8:26-29***

An evangelism professor gave a definition of evangelism as “*building a bridge from your heart to the heart of a lost person so Jesus can walk across.*”

Bridge building requires close contact as well as a radical commitment to relationship building.

There is a term that has been coined, known as **Friendship** evangelism, which is where a Christian develops a relationship with a non-believer, eventually leading to sharing the Gospel.

Friendship Evangelism can feel less intimidating to the person receiving it than a stranger sharing the Gospel with them.

Acts 8:26-29 provides practical guidance for effective one-on-one evangelism.

In ***verse 26***, an angel of the LORD told Philip, “***Arise and go.***”

The first task of anyone who wants to share the Gospel is to “*Arise and go*” where the LORD **leads**. It was the LORD who sent this angel to Philip with the prompting to go.

The Great Commission begins with the command to “*go*.”

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. NKJV

Before we can “*go*,” we have to be willing to “get up”, that is, to be ready to respond to opportunities for sharing God’s Word.

The Church in America today has a “come to church and see” approach to the Gospel, rather than a go and tell approach.

But the invitation to “come and see” needs to be extended by people who are willing to get out of their comfort zones and outside of the four walls of the church.

This is why small groups are so important. Sometimes when we invite people to church, they are uncomfortable and have been burned by a church, but they will attend a meeting at a house.

Imagine Philip in Samaria, and the ministry was booming, and then all of a sudden, the Lord told him to go to the desert.

Can you hear Philip questioning the LORD? God, I hate the desert, and how does traveling to the desert grow the kingdom?

But Philip went where he could not physically see because he trusted the LORD’s view of the situation.

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. NKJV

Many commentators believe the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch was how the Gospel was first delivered to Africa.

It is also good to notice that this eunuch was seeking the LORD, and we know this because he was reading from *Isaiah*.

Philip caught up to the Eunuch and began to speak with him one-on-one. If we are going to win people to Christ, we have to be willing to get **close** enough to build a relationship.

Friendship evangelism is when we maximize established relationships with unbelievers, to build new friendships with unbelievers, show love for Christ, and share the Gospel.

This doesn't mean joining them in their sin, but it is having a relationship with them and letting our light shine into their lives.

Actively listening to the Holy Spirit to open doors of opportunity to communicate the Gospel to people in our lives.

Jesus practiced up close, evangelism with the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and Matthew the tax collector.

Jesus did not give a lot of time to those who opposed Him; instead, He spent time with sinners, without joining in their sin.

But, keep in mind what Paul said to the Church about people we closely associate with...

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits. NKJV

II. Phillip overcomes barriers to witness for Christ.

Read Acts 8:30-33

Notice again, the LORD was behind the scenes of this entire narrative, working in the life of Philip and the life of the eunuch.

The LORD drew the heart of the eunuch, and He also **prompted** Philip to share Christ. As Philip approached the chariot, the eunuch was reading *Isaiah* and asked him if he understood.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Philip obediently overcame social opposition, approached the wagon, and engaged the eunuch in conversation about what he was reading.

Verse 31 has the invitation from the Ethiopian Eunuch to Philip to “***come up and sit,***” and Philip had to climb over a lot of barriers when he climbed into that chariot.

He had to climb over the race barrier, the class barrier, the culture barrier, and the barrier of religious beliefs. None of those barriers mattered to Philip, and they should not matter to us.

We must be willing to go up and sit, to spend time with those who are hungry to know the LORD.

We should be willing to pour out our lives for their sake.

The eunuch’s conversion to Christ illustrates Jesus’ promise to draw all people to Himself by dying on the Cross.

John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

John 12:33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. NKJV

The fact that the man in the chariot was a eunuch meant he was from a lower class and had worked his way up into this position

This man was in charge of the queen of Ethiopia's money, which was a huge responsibility.

Servants like this Ethiopian were required to become eunuchs because the royal class didn't want them polluting their bloodlines and diluting their inheritances.

In a culture in which marriage and family were everything, this man gave it all up for career advancement. Yet his career success obviously did not **fulfill** him.

The Ethiopian eunuch traveled to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel. As a high-ranking official of the queen of Ethiopia, he had traveled to Jerusalem, as a proselyte of the Jewish faith.

The Ethiopian eunuch traveled to Jerusalem for business and to participate in Jewish worship during a festival.

Because he was not born a Jew, the Ethiopian could only enter the Court of the **Gentiles**, which was accessible to non-Jews, to visit the Temple, pray, and learn about the God of Israel.

Gentile proselytes were not permitted to enter the inner court of the Temple, which was reserved for naturally born Jews.

Notice in *verses 32-33* that the Eunuch was reading the prophecy of *Isaiah*, because, at this time in history, they only had the Old Testament, as the New Testament was unfolding.

This man somehow received a copy of the ***Book of Isaiah***, and ***Isaiah*** was written 800 years before Jesus walked on earth.

Jesus was never the Father's plan "B"; Jesus dying for our sins was always the plan to enable us to have a relationship with Him

III. Phillip was familiar with the Word of God.

Read ***Acts 8:34-35***

It will not be our clever stories or our preaching method that will win the lost to Christ. We must be willing to preach Jesus Christ and be familiar enough with His Word to point them to Jesus.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. NKJV

We do not need to be Theologians, but we must have some knowledge of His Word to point lost people to Jesus! The use of the Roman road scripture method is always a great tool to use.

The Holy Spirit works through His Word much more than He works through personalities or good intentions.

In order to share the Gospel properly, we must be familiar with the Word of God and keep Jesus at the **Center** of everything.

Philip didn't preach religion, Judaism, or denominationalism to him, but he preached Jesus and Him crucified for atonement.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

1 Corinthians 15:15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God. NKJV

The eunuch was drawn by the Holy Spirit to read ***Isaiah***, about Jesus, and Phillip showed the Ethiopian Christ through that scripture.

Philip "opened his mouth" and told the Good News about Jesus Christ, who is the Savior in both the Old and New Testaments.

Philip told the man how Jesus, the Righteous sufferer, was crucified, rose again, and won the victory over sin and death, so repentance and forgiveness of sin are available in Jesus.

The commentator, C. E. Lincoln, said, "*Do you want to understand the Old Testament?*

*“Stand at the empty tomb, under the shadow of an empty cross, within earshot of the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of the apostles and **read!**”* (C. E. Lincoln)

After explaining the passage, the eunuch asks the question:

IV. *What hinders me from being baptized?*

Read ***Acts 8:36-38***

Many people get confused between the **Spiritual** Baptism that happens internally at the moment of salvation, compared to Water Baptism a believer does to demonstrate faith publicly.

A **Believer's** or a Water Baptism is a public announcement of a personal decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Some teach that Water Baptism is necessary for Salvation, but the Bible teaches that Salvation comes by grace through faith.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Ephesians 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. NKJV

KEY: Water Baptism is a public announcement of a personal decision to **commit to and follow** Jesus as Lord and Savior.

A Believer's (Water) Baptism is for someone who has placed their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ to be saved.

Someone must first **believe** in Jesus for Salvation, and then they should be immediately baptized, demonstrating their faith as an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow Christ.

Why should we be water baptized? Water Baptism is a command not only given by Jesus but was **obeyed** by Jesus, as well.

Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, " This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Water Baptism is a picture and representation of the washing away of sins and dying to our "old self" and old way of life. Coming up out of the water represents us rising to new life.

Jesus' instruction to His followers to identify with Him through baptism is found in the Great Commission.

The last words of Jesus in *Matthew 28:19, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. NKJV*

Since Water Baptism represents the decision a person has previously made to place their faith in Christ, it is not for infants or children who cannot commit to Christ for themselves.

People should be water baptized because of their own faith.

Again, baptism illustrates our identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus, as we commit our lives to Him. Our old life is to be buried, so going into the water illustrates that death.

Coming out of the water, pictures being raised to new life, as we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus **publicly**.

The Cross of Christ paid for our salvation, and baptism outwardly demonstrates the new birth which occurred inside.

The person must understand the Gospel enough to know that no works of righteousness can pay for their entrance into heaven.

Titus 3:4 when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, NKJV

The only time the age of a person is an issue for someone to be baptized is when they cannot understand the Gospel of Grace.

Baptism is like a TV commercial, a public announcement of a personal decision to commit to following Jesus as Lord.

How should someone be Water Baptized?

The Biblical meaning of the word baptize, means complete immersion, and every scripture includes large bodies of water.

Immersion (or submersion) is the only mode that accurately pictures Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul demonstrated the picture of Water Baptism through what happens at salvation in the ***Book of Romans***.

Romans 6:3 do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. NKJV

*How do we determine whether a person is ready to be baptized?
Use Acts 8. "If you believe with all your heart, you may."*

We will ask the person, *"Do you believe with all of your heart that Jesus came from heaven as a baby, grew up as a man, and was crucified to pay the penalty of your sin and rose again?"*

Romans 10:9, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10, For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. NKJV

Since the creation of man, the LORD has called His chosen people to commit to follow Him, be identified with Him, and be set apart from the rest of the world.

There were different ways commitment to God was shown, but with Abraham, he and his descendants were told to perform circumcision, to show they were set apart for the Lord.

Circumcision was an **outward sign** of an **inner** decision made to dedicate oneself to the LORD, and even though we are no longer called to be circumcised as believers in Christ...

For the person in Christ, the way we publicly identify ourselves with Christ is no longer with circumcision, but through **baptism**.

Water Baptism is a command not only given by Jesus, but one that was obeyed by Jesus as well.

Now for Christians, as Paul said in *Colossians 3:2, Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. NKJV

Colossians 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. NKJV

gotquestions.org said, “*The Christian life is defined by the believer’s identification with Jesus Christ.*”

It is not enough to know that Jesus died for us; we must also understand that we died with Him. Because we died and were raised with Him, the power of sin over us is broken.”

Finally, when Philip and the Ethiopian came to a place where there was water, they “*both went down into the water.*”

Christ called us to “*make disciples,*”. Disciple-making requires a willingness on our part to become a mentor for new believers.

One who is willing to let the Holy Spirit pour into their life, His presence and power. One-on-one evangelism ...it worked with a seeker in the desert, and it will work with lost people today.

If you have received Christ as your Lord and Savior, you should obey the Lord’s command and publicly profess your faith through a Believer’s or a Water Baptism and then tell others.

Christ followers identify themselves with Christ.

After receiving the free gift of salvation, the first step of obedience for a Christian is to be Water baptized, demonstrating a **commitment** to Jesus, and if it is genuine, you will share it.

V. Philip continued in the work of the Lord.

Read *Acts 8:39-40*

Immediately after the eunuch came out of the water, Philip was supernaturally transported to **Azotus**. This **supernatural transporting** is seen with Jesus a few times in scripture.

In *John 6*, when the Disciples were on a boat heading for Capernaum, a great storm arose, and suddenly Jesus appeared out of nowhere, walking on the water.

In *Luke 4*, the religious leaders attempted to grab hold of Jesus, but He escaped, disappearing into the crowd.

In *John 20*, when the disciples were secured in the Upper Room in Jerusalem with the door locked, Jesus appeared as if He walked right through the walls.

Something similar will happen when the Church is ***caught up together with Him*** at the rapture, found in *1 Thessalonians 4*.

Notice the Ethiopian ***went on his way rejoicing*** even after Philip's strange departure, which demonstrates that his faith was rooted in **Christ**, not in Philip.

But Philip ***preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.***

Philip preached in Samaria and to the Gentile cities, such as Caesarea, as he continued to teach the Gospel out into the world.

Philip is the only one in the NT given the title, “The Evangelist”.

Acts 21:8 Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. NKJV

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are all called to evangelize the lost and to share our testimony,

But Philip earned the title of the Evangelist, because once the dispersion began, he went from town-to-town sharing Christ.

For Christians, evangelism is a team effort that should involve every member of the Body working together to see the lost come to Christ.

But no matter how much teamwork is involved in planning an evangelistic event, or how many people come out to win a community to Christ...

Sometimes, evangelism comes down to a one-on-one encounter between a person following Christ, **telling** someone about Jesus.

We must be led by the Spirit, know the Word of God, and share Christ.

Once a person places their faith in Christ and inherits eternal life, they should immediately be water baptized to identify with Christ and publicly show they serve Him.