

Evangelism: Partnering with God

Stepping through the open door

September 16, 2007

Icebreaker: When was a time in your life you had to depend on God's leading?

After the Christians scattered following Stephens' death Luke records in Acts 8 that the church spread. The message of Jesus Christ was being heard in places further and further from Jerusalem.

Acts 8:26-33

It was certainly not by accident that Stephen ran into this Ethiopian who was on his way home from worshipping in Jerusalem. *How did God arrange the meeting between Stephen and the Ethiopian official?*

- *God directed Philip by sending an angel.*

It was also not an accident what this Ethiopian was reading. *What was the Ethiopian reading from? And what chapter?*

- From the book of Isaiah 53

Why is it significant that he was reading from Isaiah 53?

- Because it was a prophesy about Jesus.

God leaves little to coincidence. He orchestrates these events perfectly. He opens all the doors for this man to hear about Jesus Christ. That leaves the rest up to Philip. If Philip doesn't decide to approach this man he would have no hope of being a Christian. The same is true for us. God can open all the doors and set the stage but if we aren't willing to share the Gospel, people have little to no hope of becoming Christians.

How does evangelism require partnering with God?

- God opens doors and we step through them.
- God can even prepare someone's heart for the message.
- We have to be ready to do our small part.

Just as God prepared Philip and the Ethiopian for this encounter, how do you feel God has uniquely equipped you to share your faith with others?

- This could be through life experiences that help them relate to others.

At this time people didn't read silently, they read out loud. Hearing what this man was reading, Philip saw an open door and started a conversation with this man. Initiating the conversation is often the hardest moment in talking to someone about Christ.

When have you been like this Ethiopian just waiting for God to send someone to help you?

When have you been in Philip's shoes, looking for an opportunity to help someone learn about Jesus?

Acts 8:34-35

It does not say that Philip explained a bunch of complicated doctrine to him or that he helped him understand the omnipresence of God. He just told him the good news about Jesus. *How would you summarize "the Gospel?"*

- The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- How those events give us new life.

Acts 8:36-40

Many have taught that baptism is an optional act done after we are saved. Every person in the book of Acts who becomes a Christian does so through baptism. Baptism is the response in faith to God through Jesus Christ. Once this Ethiopian official heard the gospel it was his desire to be baptized. If baptism was optional, Philip could have said, "Why do you need to do that, you are already saved." But he didn't. Jesus commanded that they go and teach and baptize so that is what they did and that is what we are to do. He was baptized and went on his way rejoicing.

How is being baptized like the shot at the beginning of the race?

- It marks off a new period of our life where we start living for God rather than for self.

What is it about being baptized that makes us rejoice?

- We are grateful that God forgives our sins.
- We are happy to be part of the family of God.

How should these moments of rejoicing encourage us to tell more people about Jesus?

Application:

What can you do to see the opportunities to reach the lost that God sends your way?

Can you think of anyone you could talk to this week about their relationship with God in order to encourage them?

How can this LIFE group be a place the lost can come to know Jesus?

Prayer:

Make sure to include in the prayer that we can be better ambassadors for Christ and that we will see the open doors God presents us with and step through them to tell more people about Jesus.