

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 9
Evangelism 101 – Week of November 13, 2016
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

The ongoing ministry of the gospel until Jesus comes again, rests squarely with committed Christians . . . who make themselves available for the service of Jesus Christ whenever and wherever the Holy Spirit wills¹.

Acts 8 decisively dispels the myth that the work of preaching, evangelism, church growth and planting is the responsibility of a select few. As we'll see next week, Peter and John had to play catch up with how God was spreading his gospel and growing his church through committed believers. It's a timely message for all believers regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or geography.

1. One thing that made you mad, sad or glad this past week?

Read Acts 8:1-8 together

2. In verses 1-4 Luke describes an interconnected chain of events or domino effect. What is the chain of events and what was it's final result?

Stephens message led to his death, his death to persecution, persecution to scattering, scattering to increased ministry. The result being that those who wanted to stamp out the church only served to spread it deeper and broader. So though Stephen's death is tragic, and the persecution of believers disturbing, God used all of this to bring more people to redemption. Think of the countless chain of people now in heaven and to be in heaven because of these events.

3. God used persecution to get the early Christians to do what he had already told them he wanted them to do (Acts 1:8). This same story is repeated throughout the history of the church. In 1949 all missionaries to China were expelled after the Communist takeover. It seemed to be a disaster. Yet the end result was that the expelled missionaries went to other parts of unreached Asia while Chinese lay leaders took over the Chinese church. The Chinese church today is 30 to 40 times larger and continues to experience exponential growth. Both the missionaries and the Chinese Christians had become complacent. Why is comfort and success such a threat to the gospel? How do you see God using personal pain and disaster to revive Christians and mission today?
4. In verse 4 we learn that *everyone who was scattered preached the word wherever they went*. Philip was one such example. He's not an apostle and yet he was instrumental to the fulfilling of Acts 1:8 in Samaria, aka enemy territory.
 - a. What challenges did Philip likely face in preaching the gospel?
 - b. In what ways could those of us who don't have formal leadership

¹ Kenneth Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary – Acts*, (Broadmen, 1998)

positions or theological training abdicate our responsibilities when it comes to evangelism and discipleship? What holds us back and how does the story of Philip help?

Philip is described as preaching to them “the Christ” (v. 5). The Samaritans had their own messianic viewpoint involving the Taheb. Philip undoubtedly had to lead them to a fuller understanding of the true Messiah just as Jesus had to do with the Samaritan woman (John 4:25f.) and just as Peter had to do in setting forth the unheard-of concept of a suffering Messiah to the Jewish crowds in Jerusalem (Acts 3:18). Philip’s preaching, like that of the Jerusalem apostles, was undergirded by “signs,” miracles that pointed beyond themselves to the power and life to be found in the one he proclaimed (v. 6). Demons were exorcised. Paralytics and lame persons were healed (v. 7). Ultimately, it was the gospel they responded to, not the miracles (v. 12). Miracles can assist faith but never can be a substitute for it. When the miraculous assumes priority, it can actually become a hindrance to faith.² In the end, it wasn’t the miracles, Philip’s title or training that prepared him for the task or granted him success in his ministry. Simply put, it was the filling of the Holy Spirit. The same power and presence at work in us.

5. Compare Luke 9:51-55 with Acts 8:6-8. Why such a difference in both Philip’s reaction to the Samaritans and in their reaction to him? What personal lessons can we learn from this turn around?

Can it be that the answer is as simple as “it was God’s time”? It’s a reminder that just because a door is closed one day, doesn’t mean it won’t be open another day. That’s why faithfulness and persistence in witness (word and deed) are so important. We obey God by being good witnesses leaving the results and timing in his hands. Another lesson is God often uses more than one person.

6. It was the combination of hearing and seeing that led the crowds to pay close attention to Philip (v 6-7). What good works or acts of mercy do you feel most passionate about? How can you combine both words and works together?
7. Sunday’s message ended with a list of 22 ways we can “preach” the gospel in word and deed. Ways we can bring joy to our community and city. Look through the list again. Which 1 or 2 are you most likely to try and why?
 - Get to work/school early so you can pray for others and the day ahead.
 - Daily communicate honest encouragement to someone at work/school.
 - Don’t eat lunch alone.
 - Bring food you can share once a month.
 - Start a Bible study or discussion group.
 - Be part of the after work/class get together whenever appropriate.
 - Talk openly about what you did “over the weekend”, including church.
 - Get to know the other Christians – pray together and hold each other accountable.

² Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 215). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

- Learn how to share the gospel *briefly* (as in, less than 30 seconds).
- Make a list of birthdays or anniversaries and send a note of encouragement.
- Politely avoid gossip, be the voice of praise not complaint.
- Carpool.
- Be the first to welcome new people.
- Get to know their names and that of their loved ones.
- Graciously offer to pray for people who share struggles and follow-up.
- Do the jobs others avoid – cleaning up the lunchroom fridge or coffee pot.
- Tastefully display Scripture on your desk.
- Visit co-workers or classmates when they are in the hospital.
- Go out of your way to talk to your janitors, cleaners, suppliers, those others overlook.
- Invite co-workers into service projects you're involved in with your church.
- Lead the charge in organizing others to help co-workers/class mate in need.