

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 11
Leading People to Faith – Philip & the Ethiopian
Acts 8:26-40 - Week of September 24, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

In Acts 8 we learn of the first person from Africa to become a Christian, long before any Europeans ever heard the Gospel. God could have sent an angel, instead he used Philip to help a high-ranking Ethiopian who was struggling to understand the Bible. What a reminder - the same God who inspired the Bible also gave us the Church to study it with. So congratulations on your decision to be part of this journey of digging deeper together in God's word and with his people!

1. What is one thing you are good at and look forward to doing every week?
2. Where the Gospels tell us what Jesus began to do, Acts is the story of what Jesus continues to do through his Church. The early church in Acts grew exponentially because individual believers took joining Jesus' mission seriously and personally. Evangelism was a natural outflow of their faith and joy in Jesus, so much so that they welcomed opportunities to tell others the Good News. How does this compare with your experience? What would it take for you to see evangelism as "your thing?"

Read Acts 8:26-29 together

3. A common question that Christians often struggle with is *how do I know what God's will is for me personally?* What light do these verses shed on the topic?

We are responsible for obeying God's revealed will (cf John 15:9ff, James 1:25). We are not responsible for additional revelation outside of Scripture. That's God's prerogative and domain. If God has specific instructions for us he knows how to reach us, just as he knew how to reach Philip. Knowing God's will is being faithful to what God has revealed to all of us in his word, and like Philip, being willing to be prompted by the Holy Spirit. Those who live like this don't need to fear missing out on God's will or opportunities.

Read Acts 8:30-35 together

4. What do we learn about sharing our faith from the story of these verses?
 - God doesn't call us to just share the Gospel with those we are comfortable with or have a lot in common with. The Ethiopian was sexually altered, racially different (black African) and in a whole other social class (CFO) than Philip. A common Jew leading a high-ranking African official to Christ!
 - The Gospel is one of inclusion. It's not up to us to determine who is worthy of belief or inclusion. As a eunuch, the Ethiopian would have been an outsider to

Temple worship. However, his skin colour, sexual orientation, work and place of origins were not an obstacle to him being part of the family of God.

- God sets up divine appointments. God brought Philip to the Ethiopian but God didn't force Philip to run after him. Can it be that God brings many opportunities our way, ones that we sometimes choose to ignore?
- Philip started by asking questions, finding out where this man was at in his journey. This is not a "canned" approach, nor was he asking questions that the Ethiopian wasn't asking or interested in.
- Philip used the bible to point the Ethiopian to Jesus. Evangelism is pointing people to Jesus, even when they have questions we can't answer.
- It's not Philip's eloquence or superior intellect that convinced the Ethiopian. We're not even told what Philip said. The point is the Holy Spirit used Philip to open the eyes of the Ethiopian to the gospel.
- The Gospel is: Jesus in my place. Or can be thought of as: done vs. do.
- Don't underestimate what God can do through you. Philip was serving in the church by waiting on tables (Acts 6:1-7) and ended up leading a high official to the court of the Queen of Ethiopia to Jesus! Who would have imagined that?
- What Philip did is something we all can do.

5. What excuses, fears or hesitations might Philip have experienced in talking with the Ethiopian official? What are your greatest fears in sharing your faith?

6. What support can we as your life group provide to help you evangelize, even when you're scared?

Please note these and continue to discuss/ work through them. If able check in with these in a couple weeks to keep each other accountable in sharing our faith, even while still scared.

Read Acts 8:36-40

7. The Ethiopian made a decision and then acted on it – he was baptized. The sign of the Old Testament covenant was circumcision. Circumcision was not by choice as it was typically performed on children. It was also only for men. The symbol of the New Testament covenant is baptism. It's by choice and is for women and men alike. Baptism is God's gift to us and symbolizes our commitment to joining Jesus' life, community and mission.

Finish one of the following sentences:

- I was baptized when . . .
- My baptism was significant because . . .
- What I don't understand about baptism is . . .
- What's holding me back from being baptized is . . .

Be prepared to follow-up with anyone who has questions about baptism or is ready to be baptized. Don't just leave them hanging or assume they know who to talk to etc.

8. How has the story of Philip and the Ethiopian grown your confidence in sharing your faith with others?

Remember – you're a saltshaker!