

RESPOND (Application for this week) **WHAT** were the significant scriptures for you this week? (Write them out.)

WHY are those scriptures *significant to you* at this time in your life?

HOW can you practically apply what God spoke to you about this week?
[Try to respond in terms of specific action steps, specific people, long-term plan.]

WHAT will be the time frame for your application?

(1) Start Date _____ (2) *Progress* Check Date(s) _____ (3) Finish Date _____

WHO I can ask to hold me accountable for my application: _____

Sermon-Based Devotional

Lawrence Free Methodist Church

(Based on a Sermon by Pastor Alex Alexander on June 24, 2018)

Series: The Book of ACTS: WE ARE THE CHURCH

This week: **Available & Willing**

Acts 8:26-40

In the Scriptures, there are no accidents; there is no such thing as chance. **The Holy Spirit orchestrated this meeting, and He continues this work today, leading us to use the Scriptures to show others Jesus so they can believe in Him for eternal life.**

1. Always be ready to share the Gospel.

There's a thread throughout the Gospels and the Book of Acts that highlights God's providence and planning. People find themselves suddenly prompted to hit the road, or they suddenly show up just in time to encounter Jesus or the apostles. Through these many surprise encounters, God built up the church. On one such occasion, recorded in Acts 8, a disciple of Jesus was sent to the middle of nowhere without any clue as to why.

READ Acts 8:26-29 Mark what stands out to you.

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.

²⁷ And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."

REFLECT Write your thoughts & observations from Acts 8:26-29.

I.E. Psalm 119:105 says: "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." – That means that God wants to speak to me when I read the Bible – and that is how the Spirit can lead me and guide me. [See also Psalm 31:3 & Psalm 32:8]

The story of the Ethiopian reminds us that the Lord is working in the hearts of many to draw them to Himself, and they are responding.

If you look around, you can see this longing everywhere:

- It shows up in celebrity culture, where the promise of redemption and meaning gets packaged in the iconic pictures of models and stars. We worship them, longing for their fame, their beauty, their talents.
- It shows up in politics, where people rally around leaders who promise hope, meaning, and a restoration of some lost glory.
- It shows up in all kinds of pseudo-religions, from fad diets to meditation practices, that promise youth, vitality, and inner peace.

There are many reasons for this encounter not to have happened:

1. Philip had a good thing going in Samaria; he might have just stayed home and enjoyed the community he was already a part of.
2. The Ethiopian might not have come to Jerusalem to worship God; there was surely no shortage of religious opportunity in Africa at the time.
3. Philip might not have overcome the social anxiety that would likely have accompanied this encounter. Not only was the Ethiopian ethnically different from Philip, but he was also of a higher social status - a high official of "Candace, queen of the Ethiopians."

Philip's prompting ran against commonsense expectations, reminding us that the kingdom of God advances in surprising and counterintuitive ways.

2. Guide people to the Scriptures and show them Christ.

READ Acts 8:30-35 Mark what stands out to you.

³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not his mouth. ³³ In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth." ³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

REFLECT Write your thoughts from Acts 8:30-35.

We can judge the faithfulness of Bible teaching, including our own, by this simple question: Who is the hero of the story? If it's anyone or anything but Jesus, we've missed the point. Too often our conversations around the Bible get tangled up in the ethics of the Bible or the facts of the Bible. We're eager to be "right" about this point or that one, and we lose sight of the real point and purpose of the Bible.

Believing in Jesus is key to understanding what the Bible says. When we trust in Jesus, His Word and Spirit dwell in us, & we can see the ways that the Bible testifies to Him. Him. Without that faith, we will struggle to make the connections.

Consider 1 Corinthians 2:14 (below). Paraphrase it. [Put it into your own words.]

¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

What does that mean to you regarding relating to a non-Christian – as a Christian?

Philip's faith was his most important credential as a Bible teacher. His faith made him able and willing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and that was what made him able to hear God's Word and see Jesus in it.

3. Lead others to respond in faith.

READ Acts 8:36-40 Mark what stands out to you.

³⁶ And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, & the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

REFLECT Write your observations & thoughts from Acts 8:36-40.

I.E. - Philip was led by the Spirit to go to a particular place - though he did not know why at the time. God's purpose for him being there was then fulfilled - & then God transported Philip to another place - and Philip continued to proclaim the gospel to people wherever God led/put him. I believe that if I am following Jesus, to the best of my knowledge, that God will always have a reason for my being where I am, no matter what the circumstances - for His purposes and glory. And that reason goes way beyond my own purposes and ambitions.

CONCLUSION

We never experience these moments alone. The Holy Spirit accompanies us, guides us, and provides us with these opportunities. He empowers us for this work with boldness and with words, and He has already gone ahead of us to soften hearts and open ears to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Consider 1 Peter 3:15 (below). Paraphrase it. [Put it into your own words.] ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

What does that mean to you in practical terms?
