

GIVING YOUR FAITH AWAY

Acts 8

Sunday, November 11, 2007 | Prestonwood North | Prosper, TX | David H. McKinley

If there is one lesson we have learned since the start up of Prestonwood North, it has been *mobility*. Everything we plan, prepare and do is adjustable and transportable.

Life today can be described as *mobile people living in a mobile village*: airplanes, automobiles, mobile phones, wireless Internet, fast food and “to go” menus. We can even have mobile jokes sent to us on a daily basis. “Where do you find a dog with no legs? Where you left him.”

In coming days as we address Christmas cards, we may discover many on our list have a new address.

I think we would be amazed if we surveyed those in this room to see how many have had a change of address in the last year, a change in job, a change in church membership, etc.

All of this mobility has tremendous impact on lives. We drink a lot more coffee and frankly, spill a lot more while on the move.

Mobility is not just a matter of physical motion; it is a mentality—one that affects attitudes. It is easy to become isolated, independent, callous and inattentive to needs around us. Many times we don't tune in, lock on or engage with other people.

God can and does use people *on the go*. God created a world in motion, and if you haven't heard it lately, God still moves! Why is the fifth book of the New Testament

entitled *Acts*? It's not the actions of the apostles, but the actions of the Holy Spirit!

Giving away your faith requires an understanding of how God works. You can't witness without God's Spirit and He has called and wants to use you.

God Works Through Circumstances that Are Painful

“And Saul approved of his [Stephen] execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (Acts 8:1-3).

God sometimes uses hard things, painful things to move us along.

“Three times people change:
• Hurt enough they have to
• Learn enough they want to
• Receive enough they are able to”
—John Maxwell

The pain of persecution brought on by Saul and others scattered the church. God doesn't want His church sitting still in a mobile world. He has not made us to be museums, but hospitals in communities.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon

you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

They were scattered because of persecution, but scattered by God for mission.

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city” (Acts 8:4-8).

Philip was not intimidated or deterred in doing the work. Here we see a man on mission with God. What a picture of a solid believer—doing good things in hard times! He was a man who loved God and was used by Him.

God Makes Appointments Out of Interruptions

“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. 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 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:26-28).

According to the Scriptures, angels are ministers from God working to do His will. Philip was "angel interrupted."

... "having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Hebrews 1:4).

God had another meeting set for Philip. It involved mobility and required obedience. Philip did not have a GPS, but he had something much better—a DGS (Divine Guidance System).

In the midst of the moving tide of our times, there is the movement of the wind of God's Spirit directing our lives each day.

Divine Appointment: "A divine appointment is when God brings you in contact with a specific individual at a specific time and place whom He intends to bring to Himself through this contact with you." —D. James Kennedy

Philip was busy and focused, but God took him from one big, busy place to a desolate place in time to reach one man for Christ—one lost sheep.

I am learning God's appointments often come to me as interruptions—life is good while traveling a primary road, and then God sends a detour. I don't understand it, but I sometimes find myself redirected to some desert place and think, *Lord, what is this about?* Then I see how God's interruptions are often His appointments.

God Prepares People to Receive Our Witness

"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 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.' So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 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. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth'" (Acts 8:27-33).

You are not alone when you are unsure where life will take you each day. Many others are desperate for guidance too.

Note, this was no accidental tourist, but a man of prominence. The Ethiopian was of a different class and race. But what mattered was not the exterior distinctions, but the interior condition.

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds it's rest in Thee."
—Augustine

The Ethiopian had been to Jerusalem to worship. Like many today, he was probably dabbling in various kinds of faith and traditions to find strength, solace and hope.

The Ethiopian was:

- **Moving Without Meaning**

Although he was riding in a chariot, he was churning much more on the inside.

- **Searching Without Finding**

He was living in "search mode."

- **Trying, but Not Trusting**

Trying does not equal trusting.

God Changes Lives Through the Power of the Gospel

"And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 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?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:34-40).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered

that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:6-9).

What do you believe? This question is so important because the "what" has everything to do with reliability.

Jesus is on every page of the Bible. I can't explain it, but He meets the deepest need of every human soul and provides a way for us to be made right with God. It is real, relevant and reliable to the needs of every person.

Next, the Ethiopian was baptized. Baptism did not and does not save, but it marks people as Christ-followers.

"The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The message is simple, yet it is so important! A-C-T:

Admit you are a sinner.

This man had to agree with God about Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray..."

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture doesn't tell us to think more, try harder, do better. It tells us to trust Jesus!

Confess Christ.

Baptism was a public confession. This was a big deal for a dignified man. It wasn't his culture, etc., but he was baptized.

..."the eunuch saw him [Philip] no more, and went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).

I love this verse. The Ethiopian was changed!

"But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:40).

Philip was gone, but note his next assignment. We leave Philip just like we found him—giving his faith away.

Remember when you give away your faith,

1. You did not pass this way by accident.
2. You may be busy, but don't let it get in your way of doing God's will for your life.

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