

Acts 8:26-40  
Follow His Leading  
20180715

Exercise immediate obedience to the Spirit's leading trusting him for whatever the outcome may be!

### Introduction

I was listening to a story from one of my squadron mates on Thursday that struck me as particularly insightful to our passage of study for today. It also peaked my interest because it involved traveling on board a commercial airliner, something my family and I just recently experienced. Maybe even some of you here in the room can think of a time you have traveled via commercial airplane? This man that was telling his story is a busy professional and so he wasted no time in quickly getting his travel environment set to work. What does that mean? He stowed his bags, donned his noise canceling headphones, and set up his laptop on the tray table to begin drafting emails or what not. He was on the aisle. And all was as he had hoped it would be, settled in and ready for his five plus hours of travel across the country.

Then his seat mate arrived, an obviously perturbed individual, someone with a real chip on his shoulder. He knew this to be true by the other man's comment, "I guess I'm sitting next to you!" and his outrageous action of throwing his bag into the seat along with the animated gestures of unhappily taking his middle seat. The man relating the story to me had every intention of ignoring the individual and focusing on his work, just as he would have done if it was you or I sitting next to him.

This didn't work. These two very strong-willed individuals – grown men ended up having a duel over the armrest. My co-worker told of how the man set his bony elbow into his arm and started leaning into him attempting by force to recover the space which he was now determined to keep. This melodramatic scuffle was even drawing the attention of other passengers and the guy telling the story was wondering if maybe one of them would end up getting kicked off the flight – because the boarding process still hadn't even been completed at this point.

Now as Christians, when we are required to travel, or stand in a line and wait, do we take on similar personifications as these two men I have described? Either huddling down and tuning out all that is around us like what my acquaintance was getting set to do, earbuds in – eyes affixed to a screen? Or do we come across so outlandish and unexpected that we turn on every defense mechanism in those we are trying to reach that we have a fight on our hands from the beginning? It is easy to see that both of those ways are ineffective in sharing the gospel, but what I think is most common is this: *As the Holy Spirit is working and moving and even prompting us to act, we are prone to rationalize, attempting to work everything out to its possible end, until whatever the Spirit provided opportunity might have been - simply passes by. Lost due to our lack of obedience.* This is quite different to what we witness in our passage today and what is recorded about Philip. In this passage we see Philip doing what we should do. **Exercise immediate obedience to the Spirit's leading trusting him for whatever the outcome may be.**

### Exercise Immediate Obedience (vv26-30a)

1. Look with me at **v26** "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road..."

a. We just finished last week working through the confirmation of believers in Samaria by the apostles John and Peter. Converts to the faith by the preaching of Philip, one of those who was scattered by the persecution in Jerusalem, but not scattered without effect. Because if you will recall, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ (8:5)."

i. Philip had been known for his obedience in Acts 6, we have now been made further aware of his obedience to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in Samaria.

ii. Now Philip is being set up for another assignment.

1. If you were to take Philip's place would you think, okay Lord we have had a good run. Great things have occurred your message has even been proclaimed among the Samaritans, maybe I should settle in here and disciple these new converts!

2. Although this angel has recommended I go to the other side of Jerusalem, right through the place I had to flee, that seems like an unknown even a risky endeavor – so doesn't staying here make more sense?

3. What about something much simpler? The Holy Spirit prompts you to stop by your neighbors house to say "hi" but you think – that will take up too much time and they have shown no inclination of desiring to learn more about Christ. Or maybe even you think, no the last time I interacted with that neighbor it was over a dispute – some small disagreement – and that may come up again – It is not worth it.

4. I believe this is more commonly our response to the Spirit's leading than we like to admit.

**5.v27a** *"And he [that is Philip] rose and went...."*

b. When Philip acts in obedience we don't see anything cosmic occur, but he did what the Lord asked him to do and the theme in Acts of the gospel advancing to all who are far off and to everyone who God calls to himself (**2:39**) continues.

**c.vv27b-28** *"And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians,..."*

i. The details provided by the author of Scripture are not mere trivia. This is a man who had, I believe, converted to Judaism, he was a Jewish proselyte. He was someone of influence and had access to wealth. He is described as a eunuch – which would have meant, according to the law given by Moses that he was excluded from the assembly of the Lord (**Dt 23:1**)

1. So, although he had devoted himself to worshipping God through Judaism he was unable to draw near and worship with others within the Temple. This had to be a constant reminder to him that he was not fully good enough, not only as a foreigner and the stigma that was brought by that, but also as a eunuch.

2. Church, here near the Ethiopian eunuch, another like the Samaritans, like Simon the magician, is an unlikely candidate from the Jewish mind to receive anything good from God. And the Spirit has prompted Philip to come alongside this man.

a. These accounts in Scripture have to give us pause when we arbitrarily put up barriers to who we think are worthy candidates to share to good news of Jesus Christ with.

ii. The other detail given in verse 28 is the fact that this man has enough wealth and ability to have in his possession a portion of the prophetic writings and that he was able to read it. He was reading aloud a further detail we learn in the next verse, which was the common practice.

1. What is Philip, who has come all the way from Samaria to this southern road supposed to do? He was obedient to go where he was told to go, not knowing what he was to do.

2. **v29** *“And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.””*

a. A clear command is given. And what we see recorded in Scripture is Immediate Obedience. **v30a** *“So Philip ran to him...”*

b. Philip has a pattern of obedience and because of his willingness to trust the Holy Spirit for the outcome, he has been privileged to witness remarkable gospel transformation – something he is on the very cusp of witnessing again.

i. That being said, I want to emphasize at this point that Philip was given two commands and he obeyed them both.

Transition: No further commands are recorded here in the text for Philip – which means he is not only obedient, but as we will learn next he is also a capable observer of what is going on around him and engages the one he is sent to with meaningful questions – questions that ultimately help advance the kingdom.

### Engage with Meaningful Questions (vv30b-34)

**i.v30b** *“...and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked,”*

**d.** Philip knows the Scriptures and he recognizes what he hears. The Holy Spirit has commanded him to be here at this very place at this very hour – now what?

**i.** We have all found ourselves in a certain place at a certain time near a certain somebody, what do you do? Remain silent? Talk about the weather? Or do you discuss the travel? We all have doctor’s appointments for time to time, do you talk with the technician when they are taking your vitals? What about waiting in the DMV, some young aspiring drivers here in the congregation are becoming more accustomed to that environment, do you talk with the person sitting near you? In these environments if we pay attention we can usually pick up on something more substantial to talk about.

**c.** Philip gives us a great model, he provides an example: He engages with a meaningful question. Not a question about where are you going, or what is the weather like down in Ethiopia this time of year he instead asks, **v30c** *“Do you understand what you are reading?”*

**i.** It is a beautiful, engaging question, and although it could be answered with a simple yes or no, it has a sense of “Sir, let’s talk some about what you are reading.”

**d.v31** *“And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up...”*

i. Church this is the beauty of being obedient to the Spirit's prompting and asking engaging questions, the beginning of a more prolonged discussion is enabled – this is not unique to Philip. In addition to furthering discussion is the possibility of a relationships taking root.

e. With Philip now up with the man traveling back to Ethiopia, the man who had come to Jerusalem to worship, the man who was keenly aware of his status in Judaism – no matter how much influence he had in the court of the Ethiopian queen – the point at hand is that he does not understand the passage he is reading and he desires to.

i. Over the many years of reading and studying the Bible daily I find myself constantly amazed at the number of passages that point to Christ. What we have recorded here of what was being read from Isaiah 53 is no different, it is very explicit and yet apart from the Spirit making it known the reader has to resign himself to say I do not understand unless someone guides me.

ii. **vv32-33** *“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.””*

1. Picture this ancient scene with me: Philip was in a city of Samaria, he was told to leave their and go on this road. He did that. He came near this man traveling and was told by the Spirit to come up to him and he did. Philip observes what is happening and asks an engaging question that gets him invited up into the conveyance of the Ethiopian official. And now Scripture is being read together, a messianic passage for Isaiah none-the-less.

2. **v34** *“And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?””*

Transition: Philip exercised immediate obedience and found himself in a place where God was a work in this man who was traveling. A man who was wanting to worship God, and in all likelihood may have found that to be a frustrating endeavor given his status as a eunuch and a foreigner. So, here he is reading a text from Isaiah and Philip engages him with a meaningful question that allows him to move the conversation to a point where he is able to Evangelize the Ethiopian with the Good News about Jesus which is what we will look at now.

### Evangelize with the Good News (vv35-40)

1. **v35** *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”*

f. This reminds me of what Luke recorded in his gospel account in chapter 24 if you would like to turn there. Luke records how our Lord spoke to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection. **Luke 24:25-27** *“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”*

**g.** This must be very similar to what Philip did with this man as he traveled along with him. Taking this very Scripture sharing with him that the prophet Isaiah was writing about Jesus the Messiah. And the magnificent truth that even though he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and he was denied justice, in fact he was cut off from among the living – Jesus the Savior did not stay in the grave! He conquered the grave and rose. Jesus did all this to fulfill the very prophecy that was being read and many more.

**i.** Meeting the Ethiopian eunuch exactly where God had him Philip shared with him the gospel, leading to the fulfillment of this man's deepest desire to worship God. By the revealed truth of Christ Philip was able to lead this man to salvation.

**d.** The time Philip spent with him could not have been much longer than an afternoon's worth of time and yet in that time given his explanation of the gospel and of doctrine was in-depth enough that even the practice of Christian baptism was covered.

**i.vv36 & 38** *"And as they were going along the road they came to some water,..."*

**ii.** The Ethiopian eunuch had found the truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ and exercised immediate obedience himself, the type of obedience we have witnessed in Philip, this man subjected himself to baptism. Not the baptism he likely went through as a proselyte, but the believer's baptism much like what we exercise as Christian to this day, just as we did last month.

**e.** If this was how this man was told the good news of Jesus Christ and converted from unbelief to belief – and ultimately to eternal life in Christ. Let's now revisit some of the scenarios I have included that are common to our lives.

**i.** I opened with a story about airplane travel. Some of us have never been on an airplane. But the idea of going somewhere where you will be in close proximity to largely strangers, don't discount the opportunities that might be present there. Look to see what people around you are reading. See if anyone is paying special attention to your family, I have found that people that have a soft spot for kids are generally speaking more receptive to talking about life.

**1.** I would not resign yourself to solitary confinement in and amongst the great multitude of fellow image bearers that might be all around you.

**ii.** What about when you walk into an office to get a signature or have a consultation with someone. What do they have on their walls for decorations? Pictures of family members, quotations – sometimes even the inspirations posters that are so common can be a place to start a conversation.

**1.** Don't be so focused on your own agenda that you miss out on something the Holy Spirit might be doing right there.

**iii.** From a recent doctor visit I learned something about my medical technician. She is a believer here in the valley. A Spanish speaking Christian that is an active member in a regularly meeting Spanish speaking Christian church. A church I didn't even know about until that conversation. Do you think as someone who works with many Spanish speaking individuals this would be a valuable thing to know?

iv. I would love to stay focused on some more of these points of application but I know some people here may be stuck wondering why **v37** is not in with the rest of the text, but is relegated to a footnote in the ESV which is the same in the NIV or New Living Translation if you are following along in one of those translations. In the NASB it is in the text but in brackets with a note, and only in the KJV is it contained within the text itself.

f. So as a point of instruction I will say this is directly attributed to the finding of older and more reliable manuscripts that have been discovered since the time of the KJV. When the KJV was written it was done so from the best manuscripts available at the time, but since then older highly trustworthy manuscripts have been discovered. However due to the prominence of the KJV of the Bible – a very good translation, and the manuscripts used in its writing we now permanently have a place for verse 37.

i. What are you to do with this information? First do not lose faith in your English translation of the Bible. Additionally, one thing I have found helpful, is when these things are discovered in the study of God's word - see if what is recorded is refuted by Scripture. If it is not, but is sound in what has been recorded, to then recognize it as a commentary addition and to use it as you would any other highly reliable commentary as part of your study.

ii. Let's turn our attention back to the remaining few verses as we finish this point on Evangelize with the Good News. The Ethiopian eunuch could not wait to be baptized into the faith to express publicly his commitment to Christ.

g. **v39** *"And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away..."*

i. Amazing things surround this man Philip. Everywhere he goes it seems as if the affirming work of miracles goes with him. In Samaria unclean spirits came out, the lame were healed, signs and wonders.

ii. But just as joy was found in that city upon many of its inhabitants turning to Christ, this man the Holy Spirit directed Philip to in our text for today went on his way rejoicing. He fully belonged to Christ and he went along on his way rejoicing in his position of full adoption and acceptance into God's family. A level of acceptance he never experienced before in his life.

iii. **Isaiah 56:3-5**, *"Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and let not the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree.'" For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."*

h. And our brother Philip is swept away by the Spirit on another missionary endeavor. God uses his servant to preach the gospel all along the coastline. **v40** *"But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea."*

Transition: Philip the evangelist, a man we have seen to be immediately obedient to the Spirit's leading trusting him for whatever the outcome might be helped advance the gospel of Jesus Christ to another unlikely candidate, the Ethiopian eunuch, someone considered at that time to be from the literal end of the earth went on his way converted and rejoicing in the good news.

## Conclusion

So, as we finish up our time together looking at this passage have you considered how your own immediate obedience to God's prompting could be improved? Or even if you find yourself together with another image bearer you have taken encouragement from this message and from Philip's questions in seeking ways that you yourself could engage others with meaningful questions? But most importantly it is my hope that you realize that you have what the dying world needs. You have the good news about Jesus Christ, and it is your great privilege to introduce lost sinners to him and to watch them as we saw the Ethiopian eunuch go along rejoicing in their salvation. Church it is our great privilege to Exercise immediate obedience to the Spirit's leading trusting him for whatever the outcome may be. To take Jesus at his word that he will build his church and we like Peter are to proclaim he is the Christ the Son of the living God.

## Prayer

# Family

## Table Talk



July 15, 2018

### Family Discussion

1. If you are a child I am positive you have heard about obedience before. But what is obedience, how do you define it? How does Scripture define obedience? Do you see how Philip was obedient in the passage we studied this week?
2. Let me ask you this, have you ever been obedient but only to the exact requirement asked of you? Not willing to go an inch further? Is that true obedience? What do we see Philip doing in the passage? He was given specific instruction by an angel and by the Spirit. What would have been the outcome if he had obeyed but not asked any questions of the Ethiopian eunuch?
3. As a family work through some scenarios that you might find yourselves in where you could engage people with the good news about Jesus.

### GOD'S TRUTH

Exercise immediate obedience to the Spirit's leading trusting him for whatever the outcome may be.

#### Key Verse

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."  
John 14:15 (ESV)

#### TABLE READING

Lead your kids into  
God's Word...

1. John 14:15-21, Acts 8:26-27, 29-30, Deuteronomy 6:5-9
2. Matthew 21:28-32, Acts 8:30-38, Philemon 21
3. Acts 8:35, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:16-21



#### Scripture Memory: Acts 10:34-35

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)