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Acts of the Apostles

Living Praise Presbyterian Church - Home Cell Group Bible Study Feb-Jul 2001



GOD & THE EVANGELISTS

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You've heard the voice whispering your name, haven't you? You've felt the nudge to go and sensed the urge to speak. Hasn't it occurred to you?

You invite a couple over for coffee. It was nothing heroic, just a nice evening with old friends. But from the moment you enter, you can feel the tension. Colder than glaciers, they are. You can tell that something is wrong. Typically you're not one to inquire, but you feel a concern that won't be silent. So you ask.

You are in a business meeting where one of your co-workers gets raked over the coals. Everyone else is thinking, *I'm glad that wasn't me*. But the Holy Spirit is leading you to think, *How hard this must be*. So, after the meeting you approach the employee and express your concern.

You notice the fellow on the other side of the church auditorium. He looks a bit out of place, what with his strange clothing and all. You learn that he is from Africa, in town on business. The next Sunday he is back. And the third Sunday he is present. You introduce yourself. He tells you how he is fascinated by the faith and how he wants to learn more. Rather than offer to teach him, you simply urge him to read the Bible.

Later in the week, you regret not being more direct. You call the office where he is consulting and learn that he is leaving today for home. You know in your heart you can't let him leave. So you rush to the airport and find him awaiting his flight, with a Bible open on his lap.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" you inquire.

"How can I, unless someone explains it to me?"

And so you, like Philip, explain. And he, like the Ethiopian, believes. Baptism is requested and baptism is offered. He catches a later flight and you catch a glimpse of what it means to be led by the Spirit.

Were there lights? You just lit one. Were there voices? You just were one. Was there a miracle? You just witnessed one. Who knows? If the Bible were being written today, that might be your name in the eighth chapter of Acts.

From *When God Whispers Your Name* by Max Lucado



I had always been a shy person and always found it difficult to start a conversation anyway. Yet God in His marvellous way had used me numerous times to share the gospel with startling results. I had never expected them yet again and again, it happened. I just let God lead me to speak. I just let Him nudge me to share from my heart. I guess it was the deep concerns I have for people that led to all these amazing miracles. Just let Him be God in your life.

REFLECTION:

Before you begin, think of a time when you were compelled to help someone. What did you do to help that person?

DISCOVERY:

1. What examples of the Holy Spirit's help and leading do you see in this story?
2. Why did God ask Philip to leave his preaching and go down a desert road?
3. What was significant about the person Philip met on the road?
4. How did Philip handle the opportunity that God gave him?
5. What was the result of Philip's obedience to God?

RESPONSE:

A. How does the Spirit lead us today?

B. Why is important to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit?

C. How can we learn to recognize God's voice?

D. Take a few moments to think through this question and write down your feelings and answer below:
What can I do to listen to the Spirit's guidance today?



The story of young Matthew Huffman came across my desk the week I was writing this chapter. He was the six-year-old son of missionaries in Salvador, Brazil. One morning he began to complain of fever. As his temperature went up, he began losing his eyesight. His mother and father put him in the car and raced him to the hospital.

As they were driving and he was lying on his mother's lap, he did something his parents will never forget. He extended his hand in the air. His mother took it and he pulled it away. He extended it again. She again took it and he again, pulled it back and reached into the air. Confused, the mother asked her son, "What was you reaching for, Matthew?" "I'm reaching for Jesus' hand," he answered. And with those words he closed his eyes and slid into a coma from which he never would awaken. He died two days later, a victim of bacteria meningitis. Of all the things he didn't learn in his short life, he'd learned the most important: who to reach for in the hour of death.

From *And the Angels Were Silent* by Max Lucado



Topical Study: Our Task in Soul-winning

*Go near, and join thyself to this chariot
(Acts 8:29b).*

On reason the early church increased so rapidly was that each individual member felt his personal responsibility to share God's message with lost souls (cf. 8:1, 4)

I. Every Christian's Responsibility

Most Christians today have referred the task of evangelism (telling the 'glad tidings') to such "professional" servants as pastors and evangelists. But an honest view of Christian responsibility sees that every Christian should have some part in the ministry of winning souls to Jesus. Such a view is supported by these three purposes of soul-winning:

1. For Jesus' sake. The one great purpose for which Christ left heaven, lived, worked, suffered, prayed and died was soul-winning (Luke 19:10). If we are His followers, that should be our purpose too. If we want to bring joy to the heart of Jesus, honor to His blessed name, and hasten the coming of His kingdom, one way to do it is to attract souls to Him.
2. For the sake of others. If we want to really benefit humanity, do real good to others, we must point them to Christ. Souls are perishing all around us, dying of the deadly disease of sin, without God and without hope (cf. Eph 2:12). We know the only remedy for sin. Our duty is to urge lost souls to apply the remedy by accepting Christ.
3. For our own sake. The compulsion is two-fold: because of the condemnation that is ours if we do not warn sinners (Ezek 33:8) and because of the rich reward that is ours if we do win souls (Prov 11:30; Dan 12:3).

II The Example of Philip

Philip was a model soul-winner, but many of the qualifications he possessed were those that any one of us may possess. Notice a few points about Philip as a soul-winner:

1. Philip was a layman, serving as a deacon. He was not an ordained clergyman, nor one of the twelve apostles. And yet he was used of God in a mighty way.

Sources:

Irving Jensen. **Acts - A Self-study Guide.**

Max Lucado. **When God Whispers Your Name.**

Max Lucado. **And the Angels were Silent.**

2. Philip had an intense love for souls, which is necessary for Christian witness. Love for souls is not natural to human heart but God can give it to any one. How can one get a love for souls? Pray for such a love, and meditate on the worth of a human soul and the fearful condition of the lost. A soul is worth the price of God paid for it (John 3:16).
3. Philip was in communion with God and was under the guidance of the Spirit. He talked with God and knew when God spoke to him. We must constantly ask for God's guidance as to where to go, to whom to speak, when to speak, what to say, and other similar questions.
4. Philip was obedient. He was doing great work in Samaria (see vv5-8). To human eyes it may have appeared more important to stay there, yet when God ordered him to move to the desert, he instantly obeyed (vv 26-27).
5. Philip was a man taught in the Word of God. The Ethiopian could not understand the words he read. The natural man, who is not born again, needs help to understand the Scriptures (1 Cor 2:14). Philip was able to take the Scriptures and show the Ethiopian the way to salvation (see v 35). Can we do that? Can we sit down beside a seeking soul and show him from the Bible how to be saved, show him verses that tell what he must do to be saved? Every Christian ought to be prepared to do that.
6. Last, but not least, Philip was a Spirit-filled man (Acts 6:3-8). The Spirit had full control of him. This is the supreme condition of successful soul-winning.

A Final Thought:

C.H. Spurgeon has suggested what he believed are the important qualifications for soul-winning, as to the Godward and manward relationships. As you conclude your study of this lesson, ponder over each of the following qualifications and measure your own life by them:

Godward

holiness of character
spiritual life
humility
living faith
earnestness
simplicity of heart
complete surrender

Manward

knowledge
sincerity
evident earnestness
love
unselfishness
seriousness
tenderness