

Be Ready
Acts 8:25-40
Notes

I often wonder if I have forfeited many opportunities in my life to share the gospel and to serve Christ simply because I was not ready.

I am not talking about not having a certain skillset or tools.

I am talking about not being spiritually ready to share or serve. I am talking about making so many excuses to not go to church, Sunday School, serve on a ministry team, spend time in prayer or the word.

How often have I cheated God through my laziness, complacency, selfishness, or pride?

Let me make it a bit more personal.

How many opportunities has God given you to share, to serve, or to grow in Christ?

How often have we taken advantage of those opportunities?

In our failure to be ready to serve the Lord we have surrendered opportunities for his glory.

How many times have we felt the tug and conviction of the Holy Spirit on our hearts only to not respond at all?

How many times have we begun strong for the Lord in a certain ministry or service, but we were not ready for the commitment it would take?

I want to encourage us.

As we read through the rest of Chapter 8 this morning, we will see the story of Philip and his obedience.

We will see the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit.

My hope and prayer for us this morning is that we, every one of us here, will see that the Holy Spirit is here right now, and he is with each of us, every single day, ready to direct us and fill us for the glory of God.

I pray that you are encouraged to know that God desires to use you for his glory. I pray that you are hopeful that God can and will cause your life to have an eternal impact for his glory.

The question is, Are you ready?

²⁵ So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." ³⁰ Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

*"He was led as a sheep to slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He does not open His mouth.*

*³³ "In humiliation His judgment was taken away;
Who will relate His generation?
For His life is removed from the earth."*

³⁴ The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷ [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."}] ³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

BE READY TO OBEY

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went;

At the beginning of Chapter 8 we see persecution break out against the church, with the chief antagonist being a man named Saul.

This persecution causes the church to scatter from Jerusalem. One of the places these new Jewish believers scatter to is Samaria.

One of the people Luke highlights in this Chapter is one of the deacons chosen in Acts 6. Philip has gone from servant of widows to traveling evangelist.

The ministry in Samaria is going amazing and many people are being saved. The number of people being saved is so great it catches the eye of the chief apostles in Jerusalem.

Peter and John come down to witness what is taking place and see this wonderful revival.

They give their approval and the Holy Spirit is poured out on the new believers.

Then in the middle of all of this successful ministry God tells Philip to get up and go to the desert.

Hold up. “God, you want me to leave this successful ministry where people are getting saved left and right and you want me to go to the desert?”

This is exactly what God tells Philip to do. And do you know what Philip did? He got up and went.

He did not argue with God. He did not try to plead with God. Philip did not try to change God’s mind. Philip did not disobey and tell himself God didn’t know what he was talking about.

Philip knew what God told him to do and he simply did it. He trusted God enough to obey him even when he did not understand him.

Obedience is blessed when we follow God even when we do not understand him.

What if that would have been us?

- God, I have to wait until the kids graduate.
- God, that will be less money than I am making now.
- God, are you sure this is best for me?
- God, I am happy right now.
- Ok God, how about this idea. Instead of going to the desert, what if I just send some money out that way?

God does not call us to comfort, but contentment. God does not call us to convenience, but to conformity with his will.

Philip was more concerned about sharing the gospel and being obedient in sharing the gospel than he was about his own agenda.

What about you right now? Is God calling you to obedience in an area of your life? Have you been putting off what you know God wants for you?

Too often we allow our agenda to supersede God's will for us and when this happens, we lose the blessings of obedience and we find ourselves on the wrong side of God's will.

BE READY TO ENGAGE

Often, in our walk with Jesus, we miss many opportunities to engage the world with the gospel or engage in ministry because we fail to be ready when God calls us.

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

Philip obeys the Holy Spirit and heads down to the desert.

As he is traveling to the desert, Luke lets us in on the scene in which Philip is about to run into.

Traveling on this desert road leaving Jerusalem was an Ethiopian eunuch who was the Finance Minister for the Queen Candace.

The biblical Ethiopia is not the same as our modern Ethiopia. The biblical Ethiopia was located in the Old Testament "Cush."

It now covers the area in southern Egypt and northern Sudan, the upper Nile region.

This Finance Minister was of the high court of the Queen of Ethiopia.

As a eunuch he was not allowed to enter the Temple in Jerusalem but could enter the outer courts. He was a lover of God and came to the city to worship God as best he could.

This man was not allowed to be a part of the people of God even though he desperately wanted to be.

As he was returning home, he was reading from Isaiah Chapter 53, which tells us about the Suffering Servant.

So, here is Philip walking along this desert road. He looks up and sees this fancy chariot, which was only reserved for the extremely wealthy.

Then, the same Spirit which directed him to this lonely desert road tells him to walk up to the chariot and engage the man inside.

Could you imagine again Philip's thoughts? "God you have me, this poor dirty deacon on this dirty and dangerous road and now you want me, looking like I just came out of a homeless camp to go and talk to this wealthy guy in a chariot?"

It would be the equivalent of me as a kid walking barefoot carrying a fishing pole in one hand and a stringer in the other with a mouth full of tobacco going up to a man in a Ferrari F50 and asking what he was up to.

But this is not what Philip did. Why? Because he was ready.

Philip was already in obedience mode and now he was ready to engage in any way God would have him engage.

We look at Philip and think I could never do something like that. We go ahead and put boundaries and limits on God based on our personalities, skills, talents, likes, and fears.

We try to limit what God would have us do, how he would have us engage, by prematurely placing barriers to the way we'll engage with the world.

Just because you have never done something does not mean God will not call you to do that thing.

Do not allow your current situation or your present fears to place limits on how God will use you to engage the world for his glory.

Be ready to obey and be ready to engage the world in whatever way God will have you.

In order to be ready to engage we need to have several attitudes about us:

- Be humble- Willing to serve God and others ahead of self
- Be obedient- God's will ahead of your will
- Be intentional- Follow God with purpose
- Be teachable- Know you don't know and be willing to learn
- Be flexible- Our plans are not God's plans

Is God calling you to a place of service here? Is there a ministry team he desires you to serve on? Is there a mission in our community he is calling you to that you have been putting off for some reason? Is God calling you to engage a person with the gospel or invite someone to church and you have been making excuses?

Maybe, just maybe you will shock yourself at what you can do when you open yourself fully to the leading and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

BE READY TO BE A DISCIPLE-MAKER

*"³⁰ Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "**Do you understand what you are reading?**"³¹ And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:*

*"He was led as a sheep to slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He does not open His mouth.*

*³³ "In humiliation His judgment was taken away;
Who will relate His generation?
For His life is removed from the earth."*

³⁴ The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

Philip responds to the Holy Spirit and he runs up to the chariot and then he hears the most wonderful sound- the word of the Lord.

This eunuch is reading from **Isaiah 53:7-8**, which was not the entire story of the suffering servant, but it was enough to pique his interest.

The portion the man was reading from was a description of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

- *Led like a sheep to slaughter and as a lamb before its shearer is silent*
 - Jesus did not fight his arrest nor protest his trial
- *In humiliation His judgment was taken away*
 - For a brief moment Jesus allowed others to judge him
 - The Judge of all the world, allowed sinful men to judge him
- *His life is removed from the earth*
 - Jesus willingly gave his life so others may have it.

And then the eunuch gives Philip the most wonderful opportunity of all.

The man opens the door for Philip to be a disciple-maker.

He asks Philip, “*“Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?” (34)*

Don’t you just love it when God opens the door for you.

Philip proceeds to share the gospel and leads him to Christ.

This man in turn takes the gospel to his nation.

And here is an important point.

There are no chance gospel encounters.

Every time you share your testimony; every time you tell someone about Jesus; each time you give away a Bible or a track; whenever you invite someone to church; each of those moments are ordained by God in order to share his wonderful glory.

We have an inside scoop on the Holy Spirit leading Philip, but the Holy Spirit leads you and I just the same.

We may not audibly hear the voice of God, but we know this:

- The word of God commands us to be disciple-makers

- Jesus is glorified when we have gospel interactions
- The Spirit fills us for ministry and service to be disciple-makers
- The Spirit will move you to share each and every time
- The Spirit has already prepared the person to hear what you will say, no matter their response
- You win at gospel interactions by having them, not by winning someone to Jesus

Are you ready to be a disciple-maker? Are you preparing to be a witness for Christ? Are you preparing to walk with another believer and grow together in your relationship with Jesus?

Charles Swindoll, in his commentary on Acts suggests effective disciple-makers:

- *Are sensitive*- they listen to the Spirit leading them
 - “An effective gospel witness maintains a sensitive heart, ready and willing to follow the Lord’s prompting.” (*Acts Commentary*, pg. 159)
- *Are available*-they make themselves available to be used by God. Many of us are not able to be used by God because we have boxed ourselves in so much, we can’t hear the voice of God and if we did, we have so many excuses that we stay tied down.
- *Are proactive*- take the initiative to share. (In various ways)/Don’t count yourself out before you even get an opportunity
- *Be Wise*- approach the person and the situation as each warrant. Don’t try the exact same tactic on each person/every situation is different. (Swindoll, *Acts*, pg. 158-160)

Let us make our mindset that of a disciple. Let our identity be that of a disciple.

A Special Notes About Verse 37

Depending on your translation verse 37 may not be in your Bible or it may be bracketed. Verse 37 states, “And Philip said, “*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*” And he answered and said, “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*”

The reason verse 37 is either bracketed or absent from your translation is that verse 37 is not in the oldest and best available manuscripts that we have. Verse 37 is what is known as a scribal addition. While the verse fits the feeling of the passage, it was more than likely not included in Luke’s original account.

This should not cause worry. We have over 5,000 manuscripts or copies of manuscripts of biblical texts available to us. We do not have the originals, but we have copies of the originals. The authors of the New Testament wrote as the Holy Spirit inspired. We know that the Bible is the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

The original documents were written on papyrus and were shared with churches. To ensure each church could have a copy, copies were made of the originals. Then copies of the copies were made. In order to ensure the exactness of the copies, scribes counted individual letters per line. While the scribes tried their best to preserve an exact representation of the original, a letter or line was blurred here or there, and a scribe may have added or taken away a letter or word for clarification purposes. This was not done to change the meaning. The intent of the scribes was pure and was to preserve the original text.

Most of the changes, called variants are small and known, so the meaning of the original text has not been changed. There are a few instances in which the meaning of the text is questionable, but the number of manuscripts makes checking and verifying a verse and its meaning takes away the question and makes any variant easy to spot and determine its meaning.

So, texts like Acts 8:37 can be confidently removed from modern texts due to the majority of older reliable ancient manuscripts. In removing the text, the meaning of the passage, the book, or the New Testament is not brought into question. In removing the text, there is nothing hidden or removed from our Bibles from a doctrine or theological level.

Chuck Swindoll says, “The Bibles we have today are extremely reliable copies of the original texts-as close to accurate as any church would have had back then-and all thanks to the efforts of diligent, godly scholars.” (Swindoll, *Acts*, pg. 157-8).

BE READY TO BE CALLED OUT

The final readiness this passage demonstrates for us is to be ready to be called out.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Philip concludes a successful ministry in Samaria and then God calls him to the desert to share the gospel with a single man.

Upon completing his evangelistic interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch the Holy Spirit snatched Philip up and sent him to Azotus and then on to Caesarea, about 50 miles from Samaria, where he began his journey.

Philip shows us the necessity of being ready to be called out.

Many of us here today have never given any thought to being actually called out to go and serve.

God may be preparing you right now to go and do ministry somewhere you have never thought about.

- Work with foster kids
- Work with children's home

- Work as a missionary to another state
- Work in medical missions on short-term or long-term trips
- Serve overseas for a season
- Change jobs so your schedule allows you more flexibility

God may be calling you out to serve and do ministry right here in our town.

- School ministry
- VBS
- Homeless
- Addiction
- Sunday School teacher

Many of the great stalwarts of the faith were called out from churches just like this one.

The main contributing reason I am in ministry right now is that I surrendered my athletic scholarship to go on a summer mission trip.

If you are here and are a high school senior or a college student I want to challenge and encourage you to think about giving us a summer next year and let's see what God can do with your surrender.