

STUDY NOTES

The Acts of the Apostles A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS - BRIAN KRUCKENBERG

The following content is based on the message “Listening to the Spirit” spoken on 04/10/16 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

THE SCRIPTURE: ACTS 8:26-40

²⁶Now 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. ²⁷And 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 ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now 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. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And 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?” ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And 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. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE GOD-MOVED

As Jesus promised in Acts 1, the Gospel would spread from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria and to the “end of the earth.” In the first part of Acts 8 we see Philip and others taking the Gospel to Judea and Samaria. In this passage, Philip shares the good news about Jesus with an Ethiopian Eunuch. At the time when this took place the Greeks and Romans referred to Ethiopia as (you guessed it!) the END OF THE EARTH! How amazing is our God that He is already accomplishing what He promised in only a few short months.

As we join this part of the story, Philip has a dream or vision and is told to go to the south. While this may seem strange to us, that God would supernaturally speak to Philip, it shouldn’t be. After all, it was promised:

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” Acts 2:16-17

When Philip goes to where God tells him, God shows him why: to meet the Ethiopian and to share the Good News with him. God is always on the move and as His people we should be ready to move with Him! To move with Him, we have to hear from Him and to hear from Him we have to talk with Him, expect Him to answer and then listen to His voice.

- Talk about a time when God did speak to you. How did that make you feel?
- Maybe it has been awhile since you’ve heard God speak. Ask yourself this: when is the last time you asked God to speak to you?
- Have you ever thought to ask God where you should go to lunch? Maybe God has someone He wants you to meet.

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE GOD-INSPIRED

It is no coincidence that when Philip meets the Ethiopian that the Ethiopian was reading the scripture. God had prepared the Ethiopian’s heart to hear from Him and God was using Philip to reach this man. When God asks us to move and go, we can go knowing that God is speaking to others we will encounter. Evangelism is primarily God’s work: He inspires it. He is working in others and when He speaks to us that should inspire us to listen and believe that God is making a way for His message to be heard.

The bible tells us that we don't need to make our own opportunity to share the Good News but that we should make the most of every opportunity that we are given:

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; ³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ...⁵Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. Colossians 4:2-3, 5-6

This is good news for those who follow Jesus because we can move with God knowing that if we are doing so under His inspiration He is already at work. We just join Him in what He is already doing.

- *Have you ever felt “pressure” to evangelize someone?*
- *Is evangelism primarily God's work or man's?*
- *Is it up to you to convert someone to Christianity?*
- *Talk about a time where you were able to share the good news about Jesus with someone.*

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE GOD-TAUGHT

When Philip meets the Ethiopian he encounters someone ready to be taught. The man admits that he needs help understanding the passage of scripture that he was reading. People who are humble and know they need help are ready to receive God's gift of salvation.

Humility always accompanies salvation.

For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. Psalm 18:27

While the Ethiopian needed help understanding the Scripture, we also see that once Philip explained the scripture and after the Ethiopian man was baptized, Philip is taken away immediately. This fulfills the prophecy about God's people. That they would receive words directly from God:

Prophecy

²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Ezekiel 36:26-27

Fulfillment

¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ... ¹⁶“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, 16

As God's people we can learn directly from the Holy Spirit because we have that Spirit within us. This is what Baptism signifies: That we die with Christ but are raised to life with the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. Romans 6:3-5

- *How are you preparing yourself to be taught by God, or how can you prepare yourself to be taught by God?*
- *How does it feel to know the Holy Spirit lives within you?*
- *Take a few minutes to pray individually and collectively asking God to teach you.*