

Great Joy in the City

Acts 8:4-8

It has been said that every human institution goes through three stages of development: First, it is started by risk takers. Then it is eventually handed over to caretakers. At some point decline sets in and the institution is led by undertakers. Every Christian is called to be a risk taker for Jesus. We ought to be like Paul and Barnabas who are described in Acts 15:26 as *"men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

After Stephen preached his brave sermon to the Jewish ruling council (Acts 7), he was brutally stoned to death. On that very day, persecution broke out against the church. Saul led the charge, savagely attacking the church, dragging men and women out of their homes and putting them in prison. While the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, the rest of the believers scattered for their own safety. Verse 4 says that wherever they went, they preached the Word. Beginning with verse 5, the focus narrows to just one man—Philip. He was one of those scattered. We can summarize his story by means of a few key questions.

Who was Philip? First, he was a layman. Second, he served in the church as a table waiter. He was one of the seven "deacons" chosen in Acts 6 to serve the Greek-speaking widows in the Jerusalem. Third, he was a friend of Stephen.

Where did he go? Philip went to Samaria, the region just north of Jerusalem.

Why did Philip go? First, because God always intended for the message of His love to reach the whole world. Second, because Jesus commanded it (Acts 1:8).

What did he leave behind? Philip left behind at least five things: The comforts of home. The culture he knew. His friends who had been scattered. His prejudice against the Samaritans. His own personal agenda.

When did he go? He went to Samaria after the persecution started.

What did he do? According to verse 6, he preached Jesus.

What happened when he preached? Verses 6-8 are very clear on this point. The people listened intently, his preaching was accompanied by mighty miracles of God, and the whole city was filled with great joy.

Why must we go beyond 3025 Lenora Church Rd? Why can't we have everyone come here? Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). But if the salt stays in the saltshaker, what good does it do?

The church does not depend on religious professionals for its existence, but on godly Christians who scatter into the world in Jesus' name. That's what happened in Acts 8. That's how the church has always spread. That's what needs to happen today.