

## HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: *Share Your Faith*

### Acts 8:26-40

**Sharing our faith is a conversation not a monologue.** When it comes to sharing our faith, we must be careful how we communicate with the world. We can't be pushy, and we don't want to seem indifferent. **Where is the balance?** How do we share something so personal?

Today we're going to look at a passage from the Bible of how one man shared his faith. Here is a great example for us to follow in sharing our faith. I want to share 3 principles that we can learn from this passage of scripture. **First ... To share our faith effectively, we must...**

### **Be Sensitive To The Leading Of The Spirit**

This story begins with Philip going down a desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. He went because God's Spirit led him in that direction. <sup>26</sup> *But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)* <sup>27</sup> *And he arose and went; and behold, 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* <sup>28</sup> *And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.* <sup>29</sup> *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."* <sup>30</sup> *And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"* <sup>31</sup> *And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

On the road, Philip met an Ethiopian eunuch who had been in Jerusalem to worship. He was now sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Philip began talking to him, and eventually led him to faith in Christ. **Here's the principle ... if we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, God will lead us to people who are ready to hear the message.**

The Ethiopian was interested in things of a spiritual nature. This man had success, prestige, power, and wealth, but these were not enough. He went to the temple to worship. He read from the scriptures, and he searched for the truth. At that right time, God sent Philip across his path ... There are literally millions of people in this world who are seeking spiritual connection, looking for spiritual fulfillment. As Christians, we have what they are looking for. If we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, God will lead us to them, or them to us. When he does, we need to continue to be sensitive to the Spirit as we share our faith.

Philip approached the Ethiopian by asking him a simple, non-threatening question: "***Do you understand what you are reading?***" ... Philip let the Ethiopian talk and then listened to his response.

**Sharing our faith is NOT confrontation, BUT communication.** We don't need to shout. We don't need to do all the talking. Sharing our faith involves give and take communication between people. Philip answered the Ethiopian's questions.

I have taken many different Evangelism courses through my educational journey. Some required “*witnessing*” following their method! In one, we were taught not to answer questions...“*People will try to get you off the subject by asking questions. Don't answer them. Just say, 'I'll get to that in a minute' ... Stay on track and go on with your presentation.*”

How do you think that kind of sidestepping made people feel? ... **I didn't enjoy it.** I believe it made folks feel their questions were unimportant. It is as if they were listening to a memorized *sales pitch* ... **NOT...** a *heart-felt testimony*.

**Remember: We don't have a message to SELL ... we don't have a message to YELL ... we have! a message to TELL.** We don't force our faith on anyone! It's not like putting square pegs into round holes ... trying to force something that wasn't meant to happen. If we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, God will lead us to those who are ready to listen. **Secondly, to share our faith effectively, we must...**

## **Tell Them All About Jesus**

<sup>35</sup> *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

- Who is our savior? **Jesus.**
- Who is the one who died for the sins of the world? **Jesus.**
- Who is the focus of the Christian faith? **Jesus.**
- Who is our ultimate judge? **Jesus.**

It is **Jesus** that we need to tell others about. Here is where we, the church, have dropped the ball. We talk a lot these days about family values, taking a stand against gay marriage, voting for the right candidate, boycotting this and that, and on and on — We aren't declaring the message that the church has been assigned to proclaim: **Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.**

**Luke 19:10 (NASB)** —“*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*”

**1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)** —“*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*”

**Jesus is the focus of our message, not social issues.** If we closed every abortion clinic and fed every hungry person, the world would still be on the path of destruction. The only way to

make a difference that lasts forever ... is helping people make a life-changing connection with Jesus Christ. **That is our mission.** Does this mean Christians should ignore political and social issues? **Of course not.** We have a right — even a responsibility — to speak up and take part. But we must remember **our mission is spiritual, not political.** Our mission is to help people connect with Christ. We don't do that through hostile confrontation, but through loving communication. **Thirdly, to effectively share our faith, we must...**

## Give Them A Chance To Respond

**Acts 8:36–37 (NASB)** — <sup>36</sup> *And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch \*said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”* <sup>37</sup> *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 Ethiopian made the decision. Philip didn't push him into it. In fact, Philip said, in effect, *“There's no point in doing this unless you're serious about putting your faith in Christ.”* The Ethiopian assured Philip that he was serious.

The principle is: **We must respect the individual's decision** whether they follow Christ. As much as we want to, we cannot make that decision for them. We can't smooth talk them into it, or bully them into it, or soft-sell them, or hard-sell them into it. Once we tell them the “Good News” we must leave the ball in their court and let them decide. **We cannot force people into following Christ.** We must let them make that decision themselves.

**WITNESSING:** *“Sharing the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God!”* We are to share with others what Jesus has done for us and let them know how they can have a relationship with him. If we give others a chance to respond to the gospel, and not just a slick sales pitch, they will experience the life-changing power of Jesus firsthand. **We've got a story to tell the world.** It's a message that truly can make a difference in people's lives, a difference that will last forever. We must be careful in how we share our message.

If we are “religious bullies”, we will drive people away and they'll never hear what we have to say. But if we don't take the initiative to tell others, **how else will they hear the gospel?**

The only way we can achieve the right balance is to:

- **Be Sensitive To The Leading Of The Spirit**
- **Tell Them All About Jesus**
- **Give Them A Chance To Respond**

Philip teaches us that sharing our faith is not confrontation, but communication. It's connecting with another person so that we can help them connect with Christ. **Let's Pray!**