



Have you ever crossed paths with someone at just the right time to share an encouraging word, meet a physical need, or communicate a spiritual truth? Today we see how God partners with people to further the Gospel through Divine appointments.

In the very first chapter of Acts we see that Jesus said:

Acts 1:8 (NET) ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth."

The followers of Jesus were to take the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit.

As we have seen time and time again in this writing, God didn't send an angel to share the message of Jesus. **God sent & went with PEOPLE like us.**

BIG TRUTH: God partners with people to further the Gospel

Get Up and Go

Acts 8:26-27a (NET) ²⁶ Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went.

There were two roads as Gaza. Old Gaza had been destroyed in 96 B.C. (by Alexander Jannaeus) and left a ruin, while a new Gaza was rebuilt nearby.¹ As a result, the road past the destroyed & desolate Gaza was seldom used, & this seems to be the lonely road Philip was told to take.

Evidently, Philip didn't ask questions or balk at what he was told. He simply **got up and went**.

Have YOU ever sensed God's leading - leading YOU to make a phone call, pray for another, find a simple way to serve, serve within your church, share the gospel, or restore a relationship...but you didn't because you didn't have all your questions answered?

He many times do we miss out on divine appointments because, even when we sense a tug from God, we don't simple get up and go?

God's Prep Work

Acts 8:27b-28 (NET) There he met an **Ethiopian eunuch**, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. **He had come to Jerusalem to worship,** ²⁸ and was returning home, sitting in his chariot, **reading the prophet Isaiah.**

1. **Candace** is not the name of the queen, but a title for the queen of the Nubian kingdom in Ethiopia (as Pharaoh or Caesar were titles for men). * Classical writers refer to several queens who carried this title "Candace" in the 1st century B.C. through the 1st century A.D.²

¹ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 294.

² Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

2. This man was a **treasurer & eunuch**.

- As **treasurer** he watched over the queen's money.
- As a **eunuch** he would never violate the queen's body. Ben Witherington notes, "*It was a common practice...to castrate those who were in charge of kings' harems or who had duties regularly involving close contact with the queen.*"³

3. **Ethiopia** was LONG way away from Jerusalem. In fact, the Hebrew Scriptures often mention "Ethiopia" as laying at the ends of the world (Esth 1:1; 8:9; Ezek 29:10; Zeph 3:10).⁴ Known for the blackness of their skin,⁵ this Ethiopian man was coming from the ends of the earth coming **to Jerusalem to worship**. Some estimate that 2 months of travel to and from Jerusalem, along with 1 month in Jerusalem would mean this man's journey lasted a quarter of a year or more.⁶ That tells us quite a lot of this man's devotion, the Ethiopian who followed the God of the Jews.

But something else demonstrates his devotion - He was **reading the prophet Isaiah**. This man had spent a large sum of money to buy a copy of Isaiah!

The Divine Appointment

Acts 8:29-31 (NET) ²⁹ Then **the Spirit said to Philip**, "Go over and join this chariot." ³⁰ So **Philip ran up** to it and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. He asked him, "Do you understand what you're reading?" ³¹ The man replied, "How in the world can I, unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Before dealing with what he was reading (Isaiah 53), we need one more history lesson.

Eunuchs from other countries would be confronted with Deut. 23:1 interpreted to mean that he had to be excluded from God's gathering.⁷ Yet, if this Ethiopian eunuch had read all of Isaiah he had likely highlighted a great hope later in this writing.

Isaiah 56:3-5 (NET) ³ No foreigner who becomes a follower of the Lord should say, 'The LORD will certainly exclude me from his people.' The **eunuch** should not say, 'Look, I am like a dried-up tree.' " ⁴ For this is what the LORD says: "For the **eunuchs** who observe my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and are faithful to my covenant, ⁵ I will set up with-in my temple and my walls a monument that will be **better than sons and daughters**. I will set up a **permanent monument for them** that will remain.

What a great hope! No more an outsider looking in! And maybe...just maybe, what He was reading in the chariot that day, could make this foreign eunuch a true SON of God's family!

³ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 296.

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1-14:28*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012-2013), 1538.

⁵ Witherington, 295.

⁶ Keener, 1551-1552.

⁷ Witherington, 296.

Reading Isaiah 53

Acts 8:32-34 (NET) ³² Now the passage of scripture the man was reading was this [Is. 53:7-8]: "He was led like a sheep to slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In humiliation justice was taken from him. Who can describe his posterity? For his life was taken away from the earth." ³⁴ Then the eunuch said to Philip, "Please tell me, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or someone else?"

Was this a SET-UP or what!!!!?????

If it weren't for the angel, Philip wouldn't be here. If Philip didn't listen to the Spirit he wouldn't have realized this guy was reading Scripture - Isaiah 53 of all places!

Can you see the HAND of God all over this thing? This is a **DIVINE APPOINTMENT!**

God partners with people to further the Gospel

The Holy Spirit has gone before Philip and now has brought him to answer this question: "**Who is Isaiah talking about?**"

- WHO is this that has been **led to slaughter like an innocent lamb?**
- WHO is this who had **his life taken away?**

How will Philip respond? This is NOT the first time he has shared the good news. He trusts God, yet he understands something we must realize:

- ▶ It's up to *God's people* to start the conversation with others.
- ▶ It's up to *God's Spirit* to stir the CONVICTION in others.

Using the Scripture & Sharing Jesus

Acts 8:35 (NET) ³⁵ So Philip started speaking, and **beginning with this scripture proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him.**

He began with that Scripture. I bet you Philip kept reading from this passage.

Isaiah 53:8-12 (NET) ⁸ He was led away after an unjust trial— but who even cared? Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded. ⁹ They intended to bury him with criminals, but **he ended up in a rich man's tomb** [see Joseph of Arimathea - Matt. 27:59-60], because he had committed no violent deeds, nor had he spoken deceitfully. ¹⁰ Though the Lord desired to crush him and make him ill, once restitution is made, **he will see descendants and enjoy long life**, and the Lord's purpose will be accomplished through him. ¹¹ Having suffered, he will reflect on his work, he will be satisfied when he understands what he has done. "**My servant will acquit many, for he carried their sins.**" ¹² So I will assign him a portion with the multitudes, he will divide the spoils of victory with the powerful, because he willingly submitted to death and was numbered with the rebels, when he lifted up the sin of many and inter-vened on behalf of the rebels."

WHO is that? That is JESUS - written about 700 years before!

Responding to the Good News

Acts 8:36-38 (NET) ³⁶ Now as they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, there is water! **What is to stop me from being baptized?**"³⁸ So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

After hearing the story of Jesus, this man was READY to trust Him. Being **baptized** demonstrates that this man too trusts in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for eternal life.

Some of you are like Philip (followers of Jesus). What if you knew that God was preparing hearts all over our community and world to hear the message of Jesus? What if you knew that some of them might actually respond to the good news YOU share?

What if we REALLY BELIEVED that...

God partners with people to further the Gospel?

Some of you are like the Ethiopian. You have heard the good news of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has brought followers of Jesus into your life to share with you and listen to your questions. Maybe they have even explained the Scriptures to you. **Can't you see? God is at work all around you. You might not be seeking Him, but He has been seeking you!** Will you, like the Ethiopian, trust Jesus with your life? Are you ready to demonstrate that you too trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for Eternal Life?

Please call us if we can answer any questions or help you in any way.

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