



## **Sent – Part 9** **The Faithful Christian**

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In Part 8 (**Acts 8:1-25**), we explored the issue of “Counterfeit Christianity.” During the time of the early church, there were those who looked the part, but were not genuine followers of Jesus. Simon the Magician fell into this camp of false converts, seeking his own fame and glory rather than submitting himself to Jesus and His authority. Counterfeits can be quite believable, but Christians must protect themselves against Counterfeits and identify the areas of their own lives where obedience is lacking.

This week in Part 9 of our series Sent, Philip, led by the Spirit of God, encounters an Ethiopian man reading the book of the prophet Isaiah. After a conversation explaining the good news of Jesus, the Ethiopian gives his life to follow Jesus, and is baptized. If we are willing to live immediately obedient to God, concerned for His glory, He can use us to personally advance His kingdom.

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## **BELONG**

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

- How is everyone's week going? Any life updates?
- What is something the group can be praying about?
- What is something the group can praise this week?
  
- In your opinion, what does being a "faithful Christian" mean?
  - What does faithful obedience look like?
  - What are the opportunities to obey God in your life?
  - What is your perception of God's wanting to use you?

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## **BELIEVE**

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

### Acts 8:26-40 (NIV)

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." <sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup> The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." <sup>30</sup> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. <sup>31</sup> "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>33</sup> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." <sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

## **The Faithful Christian**

### **God Calls for Immediate Obedience**

Given God's instructions in verse 26, Philip obeys without delay. When we first met Philip in Acts 8:3-4 after being displaced from Jerusalem by persecution, he similarly displayed immediate obedience to God by proclaiming the name of Christ to the people in Samaria.

At the story's end, following the baptism of the eunuch, Philip is immediately obedient in his next calling to preach the Gospel throughout Israel, starting in Azotus until reaching as far up as Caesarea. God was so intent on helping Philip respond in quick fashion that the text seems to suggest He supernaturally transported Philip to his needed destination!

Philip demonstrates that obedience is the only proper response for servants of Christ. We can only come to Christ as servants because He is our King and He has bought us at a great price. Paul says to the Corinthian church:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

You are not your own,<sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.

If we are not our own, and our sole purpose is to serve God, why should there be any delay in obeying His commands? Obedience is also the proper response even when our perspective is limited. God called Philip to simply travel south to the "desert road;" these aren't exactly advanced GPS directions! Further, consider Philip's reassignment in contrast to his fruitfulness in Samaria. Last week showed God working through Philip to save those in Samaria in a massive way, so much so the Apostles themselves went there to help people receive the Holy Spirit. Now, Philip was being called into a literal barren desert for a task he doesn't know.

We must learn to walk with God with a limited perspective because we cannot always see what God is doing or what He is placing in our path. In Philip's case, it was an Ethiopian, and because of his immediate obedience the man was saved. God's assignments don't always make sense because we cannot possibly account for everything that God is doing in our lives and the world around us. Therefore, all you can do, at any given moment, is do what God says *when* God says it.

### **God Determines the Value of Your Opportunities**

Philip is called to an opportunity that many would consider much less awesome than what he was doing before. He was casting out literal demons, healing the paralyzed and the lame, and performing miraculous signs, all to the great joy and salvation of the city in Samaria. By comparison, Philip now found himself alone amidst a barren desert to speak with only one person, an Ethiopian eunuch no less.

The situation is “less awesome” for two specific reasons. One, the scope of his mission is much smaller, and two, the mission is much messier (the Ethiopian is a eunuch, essentially a social outcast in that time, and considered religiously unclean by Jews). However, this is purely from our limited and short-sided human perspective. In reality, the encounter Philip is about to have with the Ethiopian man is going to have a massive kingdom impact. The eunuch is actually a court official to Candace, the queen of all of Ethiopia, who is in charge of her treasure. He might not look it on the surface, but this man has great influence and connections in a country the early church has yet to reach.

Jesus commanded the disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. All except the “ends of the earth” has been reached by this point, but then again, the “ends of the earth” is the vast majority of the planet! However, by spreading the Gospel to Ethiopia, the Gospel had now reached somewhere outside of Israel for the first time. In fact, Ethiopia was colloquially known as the “end of the earth,” so in a way Philip had quite literally fulfilled the Great Commission!

By sharing the Gospel with the Ethiopian, Philip demonstrated that it was for every kind of person, regardless of race, ethnicity, or nation. In this story, the Gospel leaves its Middle Eastern context to enter Africa, meaning the Gospel isn’t just Middle Eastern, but African, and by extension open to the whole world. God determines the value of our opportunities. When we can’t see the use of reaching just one person, God does, and He uses seemingly small or inconsequential encounters like Philip’s to sometimes make the largest impact.

### **God Wants to Use You to Share the Gospel.**

All it took was one person to make a difference for the Kingdom. Philip shared the Gospel, and the Ethiopian’s eternity was forever changed because of it. Philip is not only a reminder of what we are called to do, but proof that we *can* do what God calls us to.

Notice the evangelistic method Philip uses. He listens. He asks. He talks about Jesus. It really is that simple. People *want* to know how to think. People *want* answers that make

everything make sense. As Christians, we *have* those answers to explain their life and purpose. The question is: do we believe God wants to use us to share the Gospel?

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## **BECOME**

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

- What prevents us from being immediately obedient to God?
  - Are we unsure of what He wants us to do, or are we scared?
- Do you find yourself judging the value of the opportunities set before you?
  - Do you only seek "big moments" or are you content with the "small moments" where you aren't seen?
- Do you truly believe that God wants to use you to advance His mission?
  - If so, why do we hesitate to take the opportunities He has given us?