


**A Five-Day Devotional Journey**
**April 27 - May3, 2008**

Acts 8:26-40

## Touching the far side of the world in your own backyard

I'll take the hand of those who don't know the way,  
who can't see where they're going.  
I'll be a personal guide to them,  
directing them through unknown country.  
Isaiah 42:16 Message

### 1 God's angel spoke to Philip

**Read.** Acts 8:26-27 Message

Later God's angel spoke to Philip: "At noon today I want you to walk over to that desolate road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza." He got up and went. He met an Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road.

**Read.** Isaiah 42:1-4 Message

"Take a good look at my servant. I'm backing him to the hilt. He's the one I chose, and I couldn't be more pleased with him. I've bathed him with my Spirit, my life. He'll set everything right among the nations. He won't call attention to what he does with loud speeches or gaudy parades. He won't brush aside the bruised and the hurt and he won't disregard the small and insignificant, but he'll steadily and firmly set things right. He won't tire out and quit. He won't be stopped until he's finished his work—to set things right on earth. Far-flung ocean islands wait expectantly for his teaching."

**Think.**

- How does Philip get his "marching orders" from the Lord? What was his response?
- When have you heard really clearly from the Lord to pursue a certain course or undertake a specific task? What happened?
- In which of the following ways would you say you generally get your "marching orders" from the Lord:
  - a. Hunches
  - b. Scripture
  - c. Dreams & visions
  - d. Angelic visitations
  - e. Human counsel or message
  - f. other \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. I'm still waiting to hear something
- What do you find most striking about Isaiah's description of the "servant"? Does this "job description" inspire you? Empower you? Overwhelm you? Or what? Why?
- In what specific way have you felt called to pursue the path of this servant "setting things right on earth"?

**Pray.**

Speak Lord — your servant is listening.

**Live.**

Pray this prayer throughout the day — and listen for his voice.

Philip stands in the middle of Samaritan fields "white unto harvest." Cities resound with joy as lives are changed and a culture is reshaped. But amidst the jubilant shouts Philip hears a gentle whisper, "Go south, now." And so begins a journey that would not only change a life but impact a nation.

The Greeks spoke of the Ethiopians as being the "last of men" — they thought of them as people living literally on the southern edge of the world. The ancient Hebrew prophet spoke of the Ethiopians as a people "tall and handsome" and "mighty and merciless" from the "land crisscrossed with rivers" (Isaiah 18:2). The prophet Jeremiah had a different and closer view — it was an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebedmelech ("servant of the king") that pulled him out of a muddy pit where Jeremiah had been left to die (see Jeremiah 36). Cabinet members of a king's court were often literally eunuchs — men who had been castrated, and thus not seen as a threat. Unfortunately, that also meant they could not approach the God of Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem.

**But God approached this one.**

This outsider, this man unnamed in the text but known and loved by God, this traveler from the ends of the earth, was right in Philip's neighborhood. The Spirit whispers, Philip hears, and he runs — and he touches the far side of the world in his own backyard. Church history credits this eunuch with carrying the message of Jesus back to his homeland and birthing Christianity among his own. Conventional missionary methods would perhaps dictate a different approach — fact finding and team building and resource gathering. But here God does it through the faithful obedience of a passionate lone disciple who touches *one* life just down the road.

## 2) A lighthouse to the nations

**Read.** Acts 8:28 Message

The eunuch had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was returning to Ethiopia, where he was minister in charge of all the finances of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

**Read.** Isaiah 42:5-7 Message

God's Message, the God who created the cosmos, stretched out the skies, laid out the earth and all that grows from it, who breathes life into earth's people, makes them alive with his own life: "I am God. I have called you to live right and well. I have taken responsibility for you, kept you safe. I have set you among my people to bind them to me, and provided you as a lighthouse to the nations, to make a start at bringing people into the open, into light: opening blind eyes, releasing prisoners from dungeons, emptying the dark prisons."

**Think.**

- What are your first impressions of this Ethiopian eunuch? What brought him to Jerusalem — what seems to be driving his life?
- How readily would you have approached someone like this as Philip is about to? How hesitant are you in approaching other people to potentially share the Lord with them in some way? Why?
- Summarize the message and call of God in the Isaiah 42 passage. To what extent do you see this as a call for those people with special gifting, rather than for rank and file ordinary folks?

**Pray.**

Give me boldness to approach people today I would normally see as unapproachable and off limits and be your heart to them.

**Live.**

As the Spirit directs, reach out to someone you normally wouldn't.

## 4) Philip grabbed his chance

**Read.** Acts 8:32-35 Message

The passage he was reading was this:

As a sheep led to slaughter,  
and quiet as a lamb being sheared,  
He was silent, saying nothing.  
He was mocked and put down, never got a fair trial.  
But who now can count his kin  
since he's been taken from the earth?

The eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?"

Philip grabbed his chance.

Using this passage as his text, he preached Jesus to him.

**Think.**

- Philip steps into a true "God-incidence" — the Ethiopian couldn't have been reading at a better spot when Philip happened to show up. What does Philip do with this divine moment?
- When faced with a divine opportunity like this, do you typically:
  - a. freeze with a deer in headlights look
  - b. pray really hard while looking for the "pause button"
  - c. joyfully but nervously seize the moment
  - d. only realize later that this was a divine moment
  - e. other \_\_\_\_\_
- What would it look like for you to preach Jesus to someone? What are some different things you might share?

**Pray.**

Lord, steady my trembling hands as I grab my chance to be Jesus in this world to someone today.

**Live.**

Be ready for and seize your divine moment today.

## 3) Climb into the chariot

**Read.** Acts 8:29-31 Message

The Spirit told Philip, "Climb into the chariot." Running up alongside, Philip heard the eunuch reading Isaiah and asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?" He answered, "How can I without some help?" and invited Philip into the chariot with him.

**Read.** Isaiah 42:16 Message

I'll take the hand of those who don't know the way,  
who can't see where they're going.  
I'll be a personal guide to them,  
directing them through unknown country.  
I'll be right there to show them what roads to take,  
make sure they don't fall into the ditch.  
These are the things I'll be doing for them—  
sticking with them, not leaving them for a minute.

**Think.**

- First an angel directed Philip to head south, now the Spirit tells him to climb into the chariot. What is the "secret" of really tracking with the Lord in practical ways like this? When have you experienced this kind of connectedness with God?
- To climb into the chariot must have been something like us trying to jump into a limo in a passing motorcade. Would you debate with God about the wisdom of doing this or would you typically just go for it?
- When's the last time you did something wild and impulsive under God's lead? How do we tell the difference between divine prompting and human rashness?

**Pray.**

Spirit, fill me with holy chutzpah today to take the hand of those who don't know the way. Guide me as I help guide others.

**Live.**

Respond immediately to a radical divine prompting today.

## 5) He had what he'd come for

**Read.** Acts 8:36-40 Message

As they continued down the road, they came to a stream of water. The eunuch said, "Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him on the spot. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God suddenly took Philip off, and that was the last the eunuch saw of him. But he didn't mind. He had what he'd come for and went on down the road as happy as he could be.

Philip showed up in Azotus and continued north, preaching the Message in all the villages along that route until he arrived at Caesarea.

**Think.**

- What really speaks to you as you read the Ethiopian's conversion experience? What surprises you? Inspires you? How does his conversion experience compare with your own?
- How does this "evangelism" encounter compare with your own efforts in sharing Jesus with others?
- What one primary lesson have you learned from watching Philip this week?
- What one primary lesson have you learned from observing the Ethiopian eunuch and his response to God?

**Pray.**

Father, give me the hunger and passion of the Ethiopian eunuch to always seek your face and give me the obedient and trusting heart of Philip to yield to your direction wherever you would lead.

**Live.**

When response to God is called for today, "stop the chariot" and obey on the spot!