

## A LAYMAN'S MINISTRY

**TEXT:**        *Acts 8:35: Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

### I. PHILIP SERVED WHEREVER HE WAS.

- a. In Jerusalem, he was one of the seven appointed to do supervisory duties and take care of the distribution of alms.
- b. Driven from Jerusalem by great persecution of the church, he went to Samaria and preached there.
  1. He had a successful "Campaign" for Christ in Sychar (the old Shechem of the Old Testament, the site of Jacob's well).
  2. While "meetings" were still going well, God directed Philip to leave and go to Gaza.
- c. Philip's ministry in Gaza was to one man.

1. Did he feel demoted?
2. Was he impressed by numbers, as we are in this day and age?
3. Was he too busy being "faithful" to worry about appearing "successful"?
4. Was he racially prejudiced and unable to tell that black man about Jesus?



**Sometimes laymen are called on to do the work Philip did in Jerusalem.**

- a. Administrative duties

**Acts 6:5-7:**

***<sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and***

***Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:***

***<sup>6</sup> Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.***

***<sup>7</sup> And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.***

b. Distribution of relief supplies

***Acts 1:1-7:***

***<sup>1</sup> The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,***

***<sup>2</sup> Until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Spirit had given Commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen:***

***<sup>3</sup> To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God:***

***<sup>4</sup> And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me.***

***<sup>5</sup> For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.***

***<sup>6</sup> When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?***

***<sup>7</sup> And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His Own power.***

c. Handling money matters

***Acts 6:3: Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.***

## **II. A FEW LAYMEN FIND THEMSELVES BEING USED AS PHILIP WAS IN SAMARIA.**

**Some laymen are being used today to reach many who are outside the influence of the organized church.**

1. **Christian Athletes.** This group has many effective lay speakers who talk to large gatherings such as those on the Florida beaches at Easter time.
2. **Men like Senator Hatfield** are able to speak to audiences not always available to organized churches and can witness for the Master.
3. **Dedicated Christian teachers** can speak to classrooms filled with children who need to know about Jesus — and if they are as brave as Philip, they can!!

**III. MOST LAYMEN FIND THEIR MOST EFFECTIVE WITNESSING IS DONE AS PHILIP DID IN GAZA — TO ONE MAN!! PREACH JESUS PERSON TO PERSON!!**

A. Philip preached to one who was already open to the leading of the Spirit.

1. The Ethiopian eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship. He left empty, but hungry for God.



2. He was on the way home reading the Book of Isaiah, and God saw him and sent a top soul winner to him.

3. He was “hungering and thirsting” for the knowledge to understand the Scriptures.

APPLICATION: Effective lay-witnessing is Holy Spirit-guided. Good results can’t be expected unless the Holy Spirit is already working. This is delicate, Holy talk. The Spirit spoke! Join yourself to this chariot — Philip ran! God gives us running preachers and witnesses enthusiasm!

B. Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him - Jesus.

**Acts 8:35: Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.**

We have too many shut-mouth Christians when it comes to witnessing for Christ, and all too often their mouths are wide open to gossip or criticism.

What impresses me is that Philip witnessed just a few days before the murder of Stephen 'who opened his mouth about Jesus'. Stephen could have still been alive if he had not opened his mouth for the Lord. Similarly, Peter and John said this:

**Acts 4:19-20:**

**19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.**

**20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**

C. Philip was obedient to God's call.

He left a church where the shouts rang in his ears of people being saved; while filled with the Holy Spirit, he went to the desert. It looked foolish, but he went. Very few of us are fools for Christ's sake like Philip. Look at Joshua at Jericho — he had no spears, no swords; he just marched around a city seven days at God's command.

D. Like Peter preaching to Cornelius, Philip preached repentance and the remission of sins.

Like Paul at Thessalonica, Philip preached Christ risen from the dead. He told the plain, Life-giving Truth of the Gospel. The Gospel is for all, for all have sinned.

**Romans 3:23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15:**

**14 For the Love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:**

***15 And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.***

E. Philip preached to a big dignitary from Ethiopia riding in a chariot, surrounded by soldiers and servants. He led this African statesman to a saving knowledge of Christ.



APPLICATION: Lay-witnesses don't draw attention to themselves, or to their church, or to the leaders of their church, but to Jesus the Christ.

#### **IV. RESULTS OF PHILIP'S LAY-EVANGELISM:**

- A. *More efficient working of the church in Jerusalem though his assistance.*
- B. *He led others, Peter and John, in taking the message of the risen Christ to Samaria, helping break down anti-Samaritan prejudices.*
- C. *He spoke to one Ethiopian who evangelized his whole country.*



D. *He knew his Bible and his Lord.*

Church historian, Eusebius, writes that the Eunuch preached there the knowledge of the God of the universe and the life-giving abode of the Saviour with men.

Lay-witnessing is a chain-reaction.

Through Philip's obedience to the Holy Spirit and this man's acceptance of the Word, the prophecy of the 68<sup>th</sup> Psalm was fulfilled:

***Psalms 68:31b: Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.***

**APPLICATION:** Who can tell how far reaching one person's testimony may go.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In an eastern college some years ago, a study was done by some undergraduates on a group of grade school children in an elementary school near by. They made case histories on all those who showed tendencies to be juvenile delinquents. They forecasted the percentage that would be in jail, or in some way would be dropouts from a productive society. Twenty years later a follow-up was made. After much effort, the persons in the previous study were tracked down. But the results were surprising. A very small percentage had become, in any sense of the word "dropouts"; and the successful people, in telling their individual stories, usually mentioned somewhere the name of Aunt Jane. It seems that one woman living in this neighborhood loved these kids enough to tell them about Jesus and His Way of life for them. That made all the difference.

**CONCLUSION:** Each layman must find how God can use him best, then fill that place. Philip was a layman — overshadowed by great preachers like Peter and Paul — and yet he opened the field of evangelization in Samaria and in Ethiopia.

Philip never set out to be a preacher — he just witnessed for his Lord and allowed himself to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Aunt Jane wouldn't consider herself a preacher or an evangelist, but through her witness, the Holy Spirit changed the lives of many young people.



**“If you cannot pray like Peter  
If you cannot preach like Paul  
You can tell the world of Jesus  
Who died to save us all.”**

He was not an apostle or an ordained minister, but a layman chosen by the apostles to serve tables. We know him today as a Spirit-led Evangelist who turned a whole city to Christ.

In Georgia, on a Turpentine Plantation, was a colored man on fire for God. He was witnessing and winning souls to Christ everywhere. So many found Christ and joined the church of which he was a member that the preacher got jealous. So he reproved this dedicated brother and told him: “*You knows about dat apostolic successor don’t you? You ain’t supposed to preach unless you is one of them elected by God!*” His reply was, “*Parson, I don’t preach. I just tells ‘um!*”

**ILLUSTRATION:** At a football game, the score was tied. On a pass play, the ball was caught by a man in the open, and he was rushing for a touchdown. The fullback was the only man between him and the end zone, and he was a short but foxy defense man. It was his only chance, but he didn’t turn yellow. He hit him hard and downed a big man.

This was Philip’s only chance. There was no Christian witness in Africa until Philip tackled this big man for Jesus.



Some of you are getting your last chance to get saved. Philip’s meeting this Ethiopian statesman was not by accident. You are here [i.e., in that Service, or now — reading this], by God’s Will, and not by accident. It’s not mere chance that we are here to witness to you. God saved us to witness and win others to His Son Jesus, the only Saviour from sin.

I recommend Jesus to you as your sin bearer, burden bearer. He will give you a brand new life, a new start in life, and a clean heart to go to Heaven.

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