

Reflection Questions: *** Acts 8***

For the message, To the End of the Earth given by Rev. Jason Polk
at New City Church of Calgary on May 29 2017

These discussion questions are designed primarily to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life.

You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Acts 8:26-40

A summary of the sermon: The Ascension of Jesus which happened 40 days after His resurrection marks not only Jesus' physical departure from the Earth, more significantly it marks the pouring out of the promised Holy Spirit which is none other than Jesus' spiritual presence. Jesus said when this happens that those on whom the Spirit falls will be empowered to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

For (7) chapters everything that is happening is happening in Jerusalem. But that is just the starting point. The call of Philip (one of the seven chosen to provide mercy ministry in Acts 6) in Acts 8 marks the first recorded missionary endeavor bringing the gospel outside of its Jerusalem context, first in Samaria then with the Ethiopian Eunuch. The call, in some ways similar to Abraham's, involves God (through the Angel of the Lord) calling Philip from a fruitful ministry in the Samaria to go to a barren desolate place without further explanation.

Philip's unquestioning obedience brings him into contact with an Ethiopian Eunuch. The combination of ethnicity (Gentile) and physical condition (Eunuch) highlight that this royal official was completely barred and excluded from entering the temple courts and thus the presence of God. To create even more dramatic tension Philip goes from preaching to Samaritans (8:4-8) despised half-breeds (partly Jewish) in the eyes of the Jews to a no-breed (complete foreigners to the covenants of promise).

Yet, the passage that the Eunuch reads should have anticipated this day. Isn't it Isaiah who's just said that when the Lord's servant comes, "All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God" (52:10) The same Isaiah who says, "You will summon nations you know not" (55:5) a few chapters later? In fact, this is the prophet who is about to say: Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely exclude me from his people." And let no eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree." (Isa 56:3)

By the Spirit's leading Philip begins to understand that the gospel is more about grace and not race. It also shows us that God is not simply one God among many (the God of Israel) but ultimately the God of the entire world. Thus begins the great missionary movement to the ends of the earth which has also brought us who live in Calgary, Canada in and continues to move forward throughout the world.

Bottom Line: God's call in mission and ministry often includes a call to do things and go places that may make no sense at the time. What's needed above all is faithful obedience. This is one of the central characteristics of the gospel mission to the ends of the earth.

QUESTIONS

1. How does this text speak to your life?

- How are you challenged, convicted, encouraged, or surprised by this text?
- Have you ever had a time where you sensed God was calling you to do something or go somewhere but you didn't understand why? How did that work out?

2. How does this text speak to us as a church community?

- What would it look like for us a church community if we are to live out this text in our city?
- How can this text inspire us by motivating and challenging to reach people we consider outsiders to the promises of God? Who might these outsiders be considered today by many in the church?
- How does the gospel create the most unlikely of friends? How should this alter our view of the make-up of the church?

3. How does this text speak to our city?

- Christianity is often criticized for being so exclusive? How does this passage move into the direction of a broader inclusivity?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life.

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

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