

BEYOND THE FOUR WALLS

Acts 8:26-40

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, June 27 2010, by Rev Dr Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

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Main Idea: Leading other people to Christ requires that we be ready, unafraid, able to use God's Word and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The southernmost of the five chief Philistine cities, Gaza, lay about fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was destroyed about 98 B.C. and then rebuilt by Pompey.

Philip, sent by an angel, would soon enter a new phase of ministry.

Surely the place and timing seemed inappropriate. Why would God move him from an area-wide evangelistic campaign just getting underway in Samaria (Acts 8:1 to 8) down to this lonely desert road? Luke wants us to see what the early Christians were really like. Contrast Philip with Jonah. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Philip, as lay evangelist, went wherever God sent. Philip was on his way to the end of the Palestinian world of that time. South and west of Gaza, the desert trailed off Sinai into Egypt...there was nothing.

Philip was in God's plan again and functioning through the Spirit. Gaza was not the target at all, but rather, an Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer to the queen, on his way home from temple worship, presumably in an ox-drawn chariot. Incidentally, 'Candace' is a royal title, not the name of an Ethiopian queen. So the eunuch is a court official, used to authority and luxury. He is also a pilgrim: he has been up to Jerusalem to pray in the temple.

Prototype of Lay Evangelism: Visionary evangelism has always been on the front lines of the progress of the church.

Principles:

- God can do amazing things through an available person.
- All service for the Lord must be engendered and empowered by His Spirit.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How ready are you to go any place for God at any time?
2. Is this even possible when I have several mouths to feed, bills to pay, family obligations to fulfill? Surely, there is a possible way out somehow....hmmm..
3. Is this assignment / responsibility limited to those "special" or "gifted" people such as pastors, elders, etc?
4. Is our church prone to concentrate on what is happening within the four walls of the church rather than find ways to scatter its members and its resources into God's harvest fields?
5. What can you do to encourage the church to be more evangelistic?
6. Do we find it difficult to embrace a person or persons of a different culture, race and economic background as ours? Do you think this is a good thing and something God will be happy about?

Application:

Start with something small. Take the first step of faith and get involved in God's work.

Prayer:

God, wake up Your church. Instill in us again the kind of zeal and vitality we see in these early Christians in the book of Acts. Give us both the burden for evangelism and the blessing of seeing others come to Christ through our sharing and efforts. Amen.