

PART FIVE  
EVANGELISM



## STEWARDSHIP

MAXIMIZING GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR HIS GLORY  
& OUR BENEFIT

By now you have probably heard about Michael Slager, the South Carolina police officer who has been charged with murder for shooting a fleeing man in the back four times. Officer Slager lied in his report saying that Walter Scott had taken his taser and that Scott felt his life was in danger.



Feidin Santana, a barber from the Dominican Republic, was walking to work, witnessed the scuffle between Slager and Scott and decided to film the incident on his cell phone. Once it was over, he told an MSNBC reporter that “I felt that my life, with this information, might be in danger. I thought about erasing the video and just getting out of the community, you know, Charleston, and living someplace else.”

That's why he didn't come forward with the video evidence right away. But then Santana read the actual police report of the incident and saw how officer Slager had lied about what had happened. He knew then that he had to release the video. “I felt a need to look for justice,” he said.

Asked how he summoned up the courage to shoot the footage in full view of police, he said on “Morning Joe:” “I don't know what happened to me at that moment to be honest. I'm a great believer in God. Maybe he put me there for some reason.”<sup>1</sup>

Santana was a witness to this tragic case of extreme police abuse. He was the only witness. Had he not pulled out his cell phone that day and had he not had the courage to not erase it and bring it forth, Slager would have gotten away with murder. Santana felt compelled to speak out. He felt that, despite the potential backlash or danger, he had to bear witness to what he saw and experienced.

If only we were as compelled to witness what we have seen and experienced in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Could it be that this young man has more courage than most of our church? He bore witness in the face of possible danger while you and I bear witness with almost no personal cost. We just don't do it. Maybe they'll say no. Maybe they will think we are weird. Wow. Pretty lame reasons, wouldn't you agree?

I will say again that my purpose for preaching on the stewardship of evangelism is not to load you down with shame and guilt. But I do think stories like Santana's can teach us something about boldness-bearing witness to the truth for a greater purpose.

Last Sunday I told you about that many of us will be doing street witnessing this summer. I imagine that some of you are wondering why we would make that a priority. After all, that kind of cold call evangelism doesn't work very well, right? Knocking on people's doors and assaulting them in the streets to shove the gospel down their throat just doesn't bring results. Most of you may not look so unfavorably on street witnessing but some of you probably do. But the goal is not to do street witnessing. The goal is to use the three training sessions and street witnessing opportunity to train you how to have spiritual conversations. I pray that we have some success in our efforts on that day but we must see the bigger picture. What if 50% of our church was trained to share their faith? Can you imagine the potential impact? Why not 100%? I'm not quite that optimistic, but over a few years I think we could reach the 50% mark.

But even still, some of you are thinking "There is NO POSSIBLE way that I would EVER do street witnessing. Wild horses could not drag me there!" That's good! You should be a little afraid of it all, which will be an excellent opportunity to trust God.

With that in mind, I want to pick up where we left off last Sunday. Let's read the passage again. *26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:*

*"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter  
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he opens not his mouth.*

*33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.*

*Who can describe his generation?*

*For his life is taken away from the earth."*

*34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water,*

*Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.*

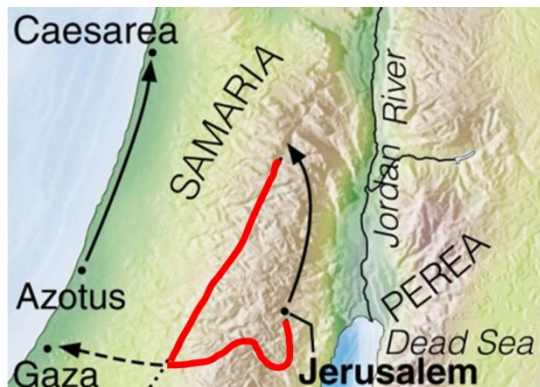
### **1. We steward evangelism by straightforward obedience.**

Philip obeyed the command to take a long walk in the desert with no idea what he was doing. Philip proved his faithfulness by years of service to widows and preaching the gospel at every opportunity afforded him. If nothing else motivates you to witness to Christ's mercy in your life, then please let it be basic obedience.

### **2. We steward evangelism by recognizing sovereign guidance.**

That's an odd sounding principle because obviously, you are I are not doing the sovereign guidance. however, we need to have this continual awareness that if our hearts are determined to share the good news, God will sovereignly guide us.

There are a lot of things that as we say, "just happened" to occur all at the same time in order for this amazing story to have taken place. Most importantly, they had to run into each other. Recall that Philip had no idea what he was supposed to do. he simply obeyed the command to start



walking into the desert toward the road that leads to Gaza. That road stretched between Jerusalem and Gaza. The Ethiopian had come to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning home. He would have been heading west on that same road to Gaza and then eventually would turn south to head to his home country. But it "just so happened" (wink-wink) that Philip and the Ethiopian ran into each other at the exact same time. Do you realize all of the endless possibilities that Could have prevented this from happening? With Philip walking and the Ethiopian traveling by chariot, you had, at most, a two minute

window of time for them to meet. Countless circumstances could have kept them apart but our God is the God of countless circumstances, is he not?

Chris Eisermann had one of these encounters this past week. About ten of us when to Bridgepoint in the Dells to help with one of their events. About 300 international students from Ecuador and the Philippines were ice skating, most of them for the very first time. Our job was to welcome them, help them with their skates, help teach them how to ice skate and otherwise just engage them in conversation. It was great to have little conversation and to serve these students. This event is a bridge to inviting them to other events where they can hear the gospel and get connected to believers. But Chris had the best conversation out of any of us. He had the opportunity to share the gospel using the Great Exchange diagram. The amazing this was that Chris wasn't able and wasn't planning to attend until 30 minutes before we left and then he ended up being the only one who had the chance to share the gospel. So what are the odds that Chris Eisermann would meet up with this young college student from the Philippines at an ice rink in

Wisconsin Dells and share the gospel with her? Do you see, it's a bit like Philip's encounter on the desert road. That's the way God works.

But it also "just happened" that the Ethiopian was uniquely prepared to hear the gospel message. First of all, he was a convert to Judaism. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship and ran into Philip on his return journey. But he was not your run of the mill, legalistic Jew. This man was a serious student. He did not seem to be merely a religious man but one who was genuinely seeking the truth.

And he "just happened" to be a high official in the court of the queen. Look at all of the benefits afforded to him. First, he was given time to leave on a lengthy journey to worship in Jerusalem. This would not have been possible if he were not a court official. Second, he was wealthy enough to be able to have afforded a scroll of Isaiah. Do you have any idea of the cost for such a scroll. Do you have any idea how he could have purchased such a valuable scroll? Well after all, he was the Treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia. He held the purse strings to the entire nation. I am not suggesting that he dipped his hand in the pot and took what he wanted. Just the opposite in fact. I think that this seeker was also an outstanding steward.

First of all, the queen would only have given the position of treasurer to a trustworthy man, right? And since he was also allowed to make this long journey for purely personal reasons, we can assume that the queen completely trusted him. Perhaps the queen paid the scroll out of the royal treasury or gave him this precious gift. But either way, he was a good steward of the queen's possessions.

Of course you realize that all such scrolls were hand copied on parchment or leather, so it was very rare for a private citizen of a foreign country to have the means to afford such a luxury. Maybe he had just purchased the scroll in Jerusalem. The entire journey, the entire experience would have left him with very high expectations. This was the trip of a lifetime-Jerusalem, the scroll. In every way, the Ethiopian's expectation would have been raised high.

Let's assume for a moment that he did just purchase the scroll. It really makes sense when you think about it because it's likely this was his first and only trip to Jerusalem and what better place was there to purchase the scroll. You can imagine his excitement at holding it and unrolling it to see the letters for the first time.

Here is a photo of The Great Isaiah scroll found in Qumran cave 1 by the Dead Sea. It is 24 feet long from one end to the other. You can picture the Ethiopian, riding along a desert road in his



chariot with a scroll rolled up on both ends and just reading the columns in the middle. As he read, he would have unrolled one edge and then slowly rolled up the other, reading as he bumped along in his chariot. He would have been like a kid in a candy store. He was a seeker of the Truth and he was convinced that he held the truth in his hands.

God's sovereign guidance goes even deeper than this. The Ethiopian also "just happened" to be reading from Isaiah 53, the Suffering servant passage about the Messiah.

*Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:*

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We know that this famous chapter in Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah. The Lord sovereignly guided this man to be reading this exact passage when Philip showed up at this exact time. But did you know that Isaiah 53 is still the primary text that messianic Jews use to evangelize their Jewish friends. I have a Messianic Jewish friend who lives in New York so I emailed him to verify this. He replied, "As to Isaiah 53, yes, it is certainly one of the most, if not the most powerful prophetic description of the "suffering servant" Messiah. This and other OT prophecies are especially significant for the Jewish person who is seeking the truth about who Yeshua (Jesus) is."

This same friend forwarded me a link with several great videos and I pulled a clip from one of them. [Listen to this Jewish](#) believer describe the power of Isaiah 53.

So we can see how God sovereignly led every single aspect of this encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian. The third principle from this passage is a skill that anyone can learn.

### **3. We steward evangelism by asking simple questions.**

When Philip heard the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah 53 he asked, *Do you understand what you are reading?*" And then you have to love the response. *"How can I, unless someone guides me?"* And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Do you see how easy it is to do

evangelism? It's not always this easy, but in general, asking simple questions does make it much easier.

But we do just the opposite. Instead of asking people simple, probing questions, we wait for people to ask us great questions like:

- How can I become a Christian?
- Your life makes me want to follow Jesus. Can you show me how?

You might wait your entire life to hear the first question and unless your daily life is red hot for Jesus, you may never hear the second question., Instead of waiting for someone else to ask us the perfect question, we need to go on the offensive (gently!) and be prepared with good opening questions, ideally tailored to the moment.

Bill Jack, a speaker with worldview Academy, offers 5 very helpful questions to have in mind.

1. What do you mean by that?
2. Where do you get your information?
3. How do you know that's true?
4. What if you're wrong?
5. What difference does that make in your life?<sup>2</sup>

Any one of these questions can be helpful in a conversation with someone.

Also, I shared this quote a few months back but it bears repeating. This is from the book Tactics. We will be using some of this material for our summer training sessions  
“My goal is to find clever ways to exploit someone’s bad thinking for the purpose of guiding her to truth, yet remaining gracious and charitable at the same time. My aim is to manage, not manipulate; to control, not coerce; to finesse, not fight. The goal of this kind of apologetics, then, is not necessarily to win someone to Christ. That may be an ultimate goal or an ultimate hope, but the goal of an individual encounter is nothing more than putting a stone in someone’s shoe. I want to give him something worth thinking about, something he can’t ignore because it continues to poke at him in a good way.”<sup>3</sup>

So the idea is gentle persuasion. You are gently causing them to think. This is exactly what these five questions do. They put a pebble in your shoe and "continue to poke at you." I have also used the Evangelism Explosion question at times. “If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to Heaven?” This question is a bit more intense but can be very effective. So asking simple questions is a powerful tool, especially if you are ready to ask them. I have found that it takes very little time for this to begin to happen very naturally in conversations.

#### **4. We steward evangelism by being saturated in the Bible.**

After Philip joined the Ethiopian on the chariot, he was asked a Bible question.

*“About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”* Can you answer basic questions from unbelievers? Notice what happened next. *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.* he started with Isaiah 53 and told him the good news about Jesus. How cool is that?



This is yet another reason to be saturated in the Word of God. Now you have to start from a position of absolute humility. If someone asks you a question about the Bible and you don't know the answer, what is the right response? Don't bluff your way through it but instead say, "I don't know, but I will be sure to look for the answer and get back with you." If you begin to have lots of spiritual conversations with people, this will happen a lot. There will be plenty of times when you don't have the answer off the top of your head. That's OK. I don't want you to be intimidated about that. But on the other hand, if that seems to always happen to you, then you are probably not very saturated in the Bible.

Why would you not to join us in this training and witnessing opportunity? I'd like for you to come up with a god reason why you would not join us in this endeavor. I'm sure that there will be some good reasons but I also know that there will be some lame excuses.

"I'm afraid"

Again, this is OK and normal but we want to help you trust God and move beyond your fears.

"I don't know what to say"

We will prepare you and equip you to be able to "tell the good news about Jesus" to others. You won't be a polished evangelist, but with some effort on your part, you will be adequately prepared.

"I don't want to be alone."

No worries, we will have you in groups of 2-2 people.

Imagine what this could do for you.

- Train you to share the good news about Jesus
- Equip you to have spiritual conversations wherever you are.
- Help overcome your fears and increase your boldness for Christ and his gospel.
- Encourage you to dig more deeply into the Word.

Rich Maurer  
April 19, 2015

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/04/09/meet-the-man-whose-video-led-to-murder-charge-against-south-carolina-cop/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.probe.org/four-killer-questions-2/>

<sup>3</sup> Koukl, Greg. Tactics: A game plan for discussing your Christian convictions (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), p. 28.