

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Where God Leads

John Kim

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Scripture:

Acts 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian^[a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."^[b]

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ^[37] ^[c] ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly

took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Transcript:

Well, Father, speak to us today through the teaching of your word. Holy Spirit, help us to understand how we can become devoted followers of Christ. We pray this in your name, Jesus, amen. Well, good morning, BelPres. My name is John Kim, and I am one of your mission pastors. One of our global partners is here today with us, Pastor M. He's right in the front row. Please give a warm welcome. Pastor M leads a church planting movement and a disciple making movement in India. I'm so excited. In just a little bit, he's going to share a little bit more about that type of work that he's doing.

I want to welcome those of you who are worshipping online. It's great to be back in the pulpit to share with you God's word. Now, last week, Scott shared, between now and Easter, we are encouraging you to have at least two gospel conversations. Now, a gospel conversation is when we talk about our relationship with Jesus, with someone who doesn't follow him. Now, these conversations can be short or long and often include questions and stories and ideally name Jesus as our leader, as our forgiver.

When we have our gospel conversations, we want you to know, please let us know by scanning the QR code that's outside in the lobby, or you can email gospeltalk@belpres.org, or you can do that through our app, and we want to update you on our progress. Now, the reason we're keeping track isn't to put any weird pressure on you, but what we've noticed is that when we collectively focus on something and do it, good things begin to happen. This is to encourage us all to do this and not just sit here and just listen to sermons. Because you know what? Jesus changes lives and because Jesus is good news and people need to hear good news.

We're going to look at Acts 8:26-40. Follow along with me. Now an angel of the Lord set to Philip, go south from Jerusalem to Gaza. So he started out, and on his way, he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake, which means queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home he was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." And then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you're reading?"

Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me." So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage, the scriptures, the eunuch was reading. "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from this earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" And then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and he told him about the good news of Jesus.

Now, as they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave

orders to stop the chariot. And then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. Now, let me ask you this.

For those of you who've been following Jesus for some time, when we hear the word evangelism, I mean, we tend to want to walk the other way, right? I mean, we all have fears. We all have insecurities about ourselves. It's natural. When my wife and I had our first child, we were living in Dallas, Texas. Our son was about one. After church one Sunday, we needed to make a run at the mall. I had my son in a Baby Care strapped to my chest. He just had his milk. He was in a milk coma. My wife took off doing her thing. And about 30 minutes later, I started to feel something warm on my chest. I'm wearing a white button down shirt, khaki pants.

And soon that warm feeling started to spread across my chest, and I realized that my son was doing his thing in his diaper. But something went horribly wrong. The diaper wasn't working, and pretty soon my shirt and pants were drenched. I mean, it was like a hose turned on and just wouldn't stop. I found a bench. I sat down, and even a puddle formed by my feet. I mean, my first thought was, please take me, let me die here. I was so embarrassed. The second was, what happened to the diaper? The diaper, it's supposed to stop these things from happening, right? Well, we got back to the car and I was just fuming mad.

Of course, I had to blame someone other than myself pointing to my wife. You know what my biggest fear was back when I was first starting out in my marriage? That people would find out that I don't have a picture perfect relationship with my wife. I was training to be a pastor, yet I felt like a complete failure. I think if we're all honest with ourselves, we all have fears like that. We come to the stories and the scriptures and we read about the apostles, Paul and Peter, Timothy, John, and Thomas, and we say, "How can God use me? I'm a failure at work. I'm unemployed. I'm a horrible student. I can't even keep the relationships I have.

My personal finances are a mess. I forget even what I'm supposed to do. I'm never, never good enough. I am a complete failure." We all feel like that in moments in our lives. But you know what? The Bible isn't for picture perfect people, because there aren't any. The more and more you read the Bible, you see that the people of God are flawed. They make mistakes. They sin. They turn away from God. And you know what? God still loves them. He chases after them. He continues to show his loyalty and his faithfulness even when his own people leave him. As we come to the Book of Acts 8:28-40, in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, I want to open up this gospel conversation that they share together.

Now, look at verse 26. Now an age of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road, the desert road, that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." Now the literal translation is this. It's the

command to go to the road that leads to the desert Gaza. The angel tells Philip to go to a place that no one wants to go to, a city known to be a desert. Now, when I hear this, I wonder why would God send Philip to a city that nobody wants to go to? What hit me about this was it's not the place that matters, it's his heart. God was talking about his heart. Philip had to walk 50 miles from Jerusalem to Gaza.

I bet in that time, he probably thought, why is God sending me to a dump of a city like Gaza, and realizing that it wasn't his circumstance he was in, it was about his heart. You see, God is always working on our hearts. We might be in a difficult place, not completely healed from a broken relationship. Maybe we're in a desert-like moment in our life right now, but that's okay. God can and does use us even when we don't have it all together. God supernaturally steps into our lives and shows us his power is at work within us. You see, right after that, Philip is walking toward Gaza and he meets this Ethiopian finance official who is reading from the scroll of Isaiah.

The Holy Spirit tells him to go to the chariot and stay close to it. As he listens to the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah, the Ethiopian asks him to explain what the passage is saying. Look at verse 32. This is the passage of scripture eunuch was reading. "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" And then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and to tell him the good news of Jesus.

We know that this passage comes from Isaiah 53, which contains the prophecy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Isaiah taught that the Savior would be despised and rejected, smitten and afflicted, and that he would carry our sorrows, and that he would be wounded for our transgressions, and that the Atonement means that a price has been paid for our sins, that has the result of bringing sinful us together with a Holy God. We have been reconciled to God. He paid the price, his own life, that God accepted for us on our behalf. We are now brought back into a whole relationship with God. I believe Philip needed to hear that message as much as the Ethiopian official.

When you read more and more of Jesus in the Old Testament and the New Testament and you see how much God loves us, he covenants with us. And even in our own sinfulness and disobedience, God, he chases after us with forgiveness, mercy, peace, and love. And that does something to you. It transforms your heart. The knowledge of the scriptures does something to you, and we are transformed. One of the mistakes that we make in evangelism is that we think it's for someone else. But the good news is for us too. When we share the good news and when we talk about it, it also does something to us.

Our own hearts are healed. It gives us more hope. It reminds us of God's forgiveness, that we are his children and that his love is for everyone. In college, in my senior year, I attended a Korean Presbyterian Church. And on Friday nights, we would have food and

worship and Bible study. On one of those nights I noticed a young man digging through the dumpster. I didn't think too much of it, but something was nudging my heart. Just responding out of faith, I went outside and I introduced myself to him. I said, "Hi, my name is John. What is your name?" And he smelled back and he said, "It's Steve."

I asked Steve, "Are you hungry? Do you want to come inside the church? We've got food. We have more. You're more than welcome to have some." Now, you need to know that everyone in our college group was Korean and Steve was white. He stuck out. I mean, he not just stuck out, but he smelled like he was living outside. All of my friends gave me this look like, "John, what are you doing?" I ignored them and we just stayed in the back during the whole time. He left that night. But every Friday night, he would just show up for food and worship. I asked Steve, "Where do you stay?" He says he has this place under the highway.

I asked him if you wanted to stay with me. I had a small one bedroom efficiency. I lived alone, had plenty of room for another roommate. He smiled and he said yes. And that night I remember he came over, his clothes were covered with dirt and mud. I asked him, "Can I give you my clothes?" We were about the same height and build. He said, "Thanks." In the morning I said, "Steve, you know what? I get home from school during the weekdays around 4:00 PM, and you can come and you can stay with me. You can have my room. You can have anything in the fridge." And for the next month, that's what he did.

As we got closer as friends, I asked him if he wanted to study the Bible together. We read through the Gospel of John, but he couldn't read it, so I actually read it for him. One of the nights during our Bible study, I asked him if he understood who Jesus was and he said he did understand. He understood that God sent his son to die on a cross for him. I asked him if he wanted to trust in Jesus that night, and we prayed together as he accepted Jesus into his heart. As time went on, I learned that he hopped on freight trains and traveled around the country. I learned that he had a father, but he ran away from home when he was young.

And pretty soon our friendship had grown. I had made a copy of my apartment key and I gave it to him. I said, "You can just come and go, Steve." We would have this rhythm in the evenings. We would share a meal, read the scriptures together. We would ask questions, and we would pray when we finished. And before I knew it, Steve was living with me for about six months. One night Steve asked me if I could baptize him, and I totally did not know what to do. I mean, he said, "Can we do it in the bathtub?" And then it happened so fast that before I knew what I was doing, he was sitting in a bathtub full of water.

I asked him if he trusted in Jesus as a Savior and he said yes, and I baptized him right then. I know my friends thought I was crazy having an unhoused guy living with me, but I knew I was doing what Jesus wanted me to do. One of the strangest things happened, and I can't exactly remember when, but Steve just disappeared. He left in the morning, like he always does, and then just never came back. I always wondered what happened to Steve, but I know I will see him one day in heaven, and I look forward to that day. As I look back, I realized that sharing the gospel with Steve was actually more for me than I think for him.

God was opening up my heart to what breaks his heart, and my faith grew leaps and bounds. Steve taught me about friendship, about love, about living without worry. I don't believe in circumstances. I believe God divinely puts people into our lives so that we can love and do life together. Like Philip meeting the Ethiopian on the road to nowhere, God brought Steve into my life so I would be more like his Son Jesus. Who has God brought into your life, BelPres? Let me encourage you to have a gospel conversation with them. I want to invite Pastor M to come up, and he's going to share about the gospel conversations that are happening in India.

Pastor M:

Good morning. I am very much thankful to be here, and I want to thank Pastor John for providing this wonderful opportunity to say my testimony and a little bit of things of what God is doing in India. Well, 22 years ago, I was part of a Hindu fanatics family. We were worshipping many, many gods in our family. Even we were sacrificing many animals to please them so that we will have peace and prosperity. I'm the youngest one in my family, as well as in my old generation. We are three brother. Our middle brother, he got pretty much sick. We took him to the hospitals. We tried everything.

We took him to many, many temples. We invite many witch doctors to come and perform all kinds of dark magic things. My brother was healthy. He was a wrestler. He was educated man in our family, in our generation, and everybody were hoping that he will bring lot of resources, lot of prosperity in our family. But a time came, he was on the bed and he was about to die. Nothing saved him. We tried everything. Nothing healed him. We as a family, we were all crying. The tears were just going on. And then two evangelists came in my village and they started to say about Jesus. They said, "Jesus is living God."

They were talking all the good things. That time I was a radical Hindu. I don't know why, but for one reason, Hindu priests that told me that Christians are very bad. We worship cows like our holy mother. We drink the milk. We need to care. Cow is like our mother, but Christians are very bad. They are the one that eat our God. When I saw them that they are preaching in my village talking about Jesus, I got an angered heart. I said, "Go away. There is no leaving God in our country. All gods are dead." Because in six months, we were just like experiencing that no God is healing my brother. After one hour, they came to my house and then they kneeled down, and they start to sing some chorus.

They started to pray for him. While they were praying, I was touched by Jesus. They say, "God is going to heal your brother. You need to pray." I don't know how to pray, but one prayer I was doing, I said, "God, I know you are real. If you heal my brother, I will give my life to serve you." And God loves the conditional prayer. Yes, he healed my brother. I gave my life to Christ. I went to Bible school, learned. My same brother, he also, he gave his life to Christ. He become believer to disciple maker to house church planter to church planter, and he started a huge movement of God in that area. From 2003 to 2009, he baptized over 4,119 people and over 400 people that came to Christ from my family.

In 2010, God lead me to start a ministry. I started with zero. We struggle a lot and started the things with zero for reaching out and these people grow, and God started to bless me. From one family, we are now 1,033 in our list. They are full-time church planter family, and they're working all over Northern India. From 2010 until so far, we have started over 50,000 churches, over 1.8 million people. They become follower of Jesus Christ. This is what God has done. We live in a place where 600 million people live in the size of Texas land. The things has to be done are more and more because still 180,000 villages are without church, without worshiping group.

We are working to see a healthy worshiping group in all the villages of Northern India so that we can see over 30 million people who will become the follower of Jesus Christ. God is at work. I want to thank you all for your prayer and for your generous support. This church has been supporting over 50 church planters and they are planting many churches. They're baptizing thousands of people every week, and God is doing tremendous work. This is the right time for Northern India, that all the villages will see a church by 2033.

Why 2033? 2033 will be celebrated or will be counted 2,000 years of Great Commission. We want to celebrate 2,000 years of Great Commission by planting a healthy church in every villages of Northern India. God is at work. Thank you so much for your prayer and for your great support.

Pastor John Kim:

Now, after the incident with my son, I shared that story with my pastor friends. He and his wife just looked at me and laughed really loud and heartily. My wife and I, we started laughing. What was interesting is they shared like, "John, we fight too." They began to share their stories of just how they were dealing with marriage when they're a little bit ahead of me and my wife. They walked with me and my wife through our seminary days, and we're still close friends even to this day. Pastor M here, I was able to visit him in India and get to know his wife and his kids and his family. He is an encouragement to me.

I mean, his life and testimony and the work and the transformation of lives that are happening in India. My faith has grown. You know what? We need each other. When we're having gospel conversations, you know what? We need each other. My encouragement, if you're in an all in group, share about your struggles and fears. We all have them, but we can encourage each other and walk with each other. Remember that our lives are changed when we share the good news of Jesus. Just want to encourage you, at 12:15, Pastor M is going to be in S140 and we're going to have snacks. He's going to share more about the amazing work that's happening in India.

We want to invite you back. Father, I thank you for the gift of love. Thank you for the forgiveness that comes from your only Son, Jesus. We pray in His name, amen, amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Icebreaker Question: This is our last week of the winter All In session. What is one thing that you learned or experienced this session that you are thankful for?

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- When we hear the word evangelism, we tend to want to run away. Our own fears, failures, mistakes, brokenness, and addictions hinder us from sharing the Good News of Jesus. We know that Jesus is good, but we often see ourselves as not good enough. What are your fears and anxieties around sharing the Gospel?
- Philip shares the Gospel with an Ethiopian eunuch who is considered an outsider and excluded from the Jewish community, unable to even be a Gentile proselyte (a gentile who has converted to Judaism). Considering the Gospel message includes those who are excluded, how is that message good news for the people in our context today?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing Group Prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.