

Introduction

If you do have your Bible, I want to invite you to go ahead and open it up with me at this time. Acts chapter 8, verses 26 through 40 is what Edwin just read for us, and that is where we are today. We're continuing in our series entitled "Help My Unbelief." We're talking about the things that stand between us and coming to faith in Christ. We're also talking about how it is that people who are already believers can share the Gospel effectively. Today, we're going to look at this man, the Ethiopian eunuch... a spiritual seeker. So let's go before the Lord in prayer together and ask God to speak through His Word today, and then we'll jump into the Word of God together.

"Lord, I woke up this morning knowing that You were still saving people, still redeeming people, still reconciling the world unto Yourself. I thank You for that now. Father, for people who are here today that are confused or hurt, diseased, lonely, broken... You alone stand as the answer. God, thank You for that. Father, for people who are seeking You, I pray today that they would find You. Father, for those who feel that they have already found You but are not close to You, I pray that You would draw them near. Lord, today, I pray that we would see a public and physical manifestation of Your Holy Spirit working in this place. Holy Spirit, we welcome You here, and so Father we ask that by the Name of Jesus Christ, You work powerfully and have Your way in this place. God, we love You, and we ask now that Your Word pierces our heart, that it divides truthfully and evenly, and Lord that we would be open to whatever change You want to wrought within us. Lord, we love You and we ask this in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

So this is an interesting encounter. Philip, uneducated, most likely a fisherman from the city of Bethsaida, the town of Peter... the town of Andrew... a small backwater in the Galilee... He goes and visits with an Ethiopian eunuch, an educated, wealthy individual who is traveling on his way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem and now is on his way back to Ethiopia. This is an interesting encounter because last week we looked at spiritual sceptics. We looked at those who really don't initially receive the Gospel. They have questions that they're kind of pressing back against and how it is that we can have a conversation and how we can just faithfully render the Gospel to people that are in that situation. This week we're going to talk about the spiritual seeker... the person that is asking, that's ready, that's really wanting to know the truth. The eunuch is a beautiful example of the spiritual seeker. In fact, there may be people who are here right now that are sitting in this room, you would say, "I'm a spiritual seeker. I am looking for truth. I want to understand the truth of God, but I need someone to explain it to me. I need to understand it more clearly." We're glad that you're here today. We hope that by the time that you leave today, you have said "Yes" to Jesus Christ. Or maybe you might be someone who would say, "You know, I've got someone in my life who is a spiritual seeker, and I want to be faithful in the way that I share the Gospel with them. What would that look like? How would I do that?" So we hope that as you leave today, you're able to faithfully do that as well.

1. The Spirit's Preparation Of The Seeker (v. 27)

Let's talk about the spiritual seekers. The eunuch... Why does he matter? Well, at first glance, really it doesn't seem all that out of the ordinary. A man is travelling from point A to point B... why do we even care? We care because Jesus is doing something magnificent and miraculous in the life of this man. I want you to notice it. In Acts chapter 8, look at verse 27: *"There was an Ethiopian, a eunuch..."* Now let's just stop right there. The text is very clear. This word that is used there is the literal word for a native of Ethiopia. This is not a Jewish person who happened to live in Ethiopia. This is not a transplant. This is a native of Africa. This person racially does not match up with... who has, to this point, been the primary convert to Christianity. This person does not look at all like Philip. But nevertheless, God has chosen this person. Now,

the reason that that is significant is we're seeing the spread and the openness of the Gospel. Next, after that, "...a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians." Why does this matter? God has picked someone not from the area, someone who is wealthy and educated, and He is sending his emissary to that person. Why? Keep looking... keep reading in verse 27: "... he had come to Jerusalem to worship." Now you may not know this, and you may just run by that without any second thought, but it is a significant fact that an Ethiopian court official has traveled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in order to worship. Why? Because people didn't do that in Ethiopia. They had their own religions. They had their own things to worship down there. But this man, God had moved in his heart and had been working in him, softening his heart and bringing him to a point where it was time for him to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was time. The reason that I bring that up is this. It is that spiritual seekers are people whom God is working in their heart to bring them and draw them unto Himself. Scripture is very clear. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1: "You were dead in your trespasses." Now... what does it mean to be dead? No life. Right? I mean, nothing. You go to a funeral, you tend not to see a lot of movement in this part of the building. Right? That's supposed to be funny... right there. There's not a lot of movement right there. Why is that? ...Because this individual is dead. If they start coming up out of the coffin... if you see movement, people start running... right? (Laughter) Because there is supposed to be nothing happening in this place when someone is dead. Dead means "no life, no movement, no expectation." Nothing is happening there. Ephesians 2:1 says, "You were dead in your trespasses." What does that mean? You had zero spiritual capacity to reach out for God. You had nothing in your own power... you had nothing in your reach... you had zero to give to God. You were worthless... you were trash... you were zero. You were dead. The psalmist says, "There is none who seeks God; no, not one." And Paul quotes it himself because he wants you to understand... not there's not good people out there doing good things. It means, "When it comes to reaching out toward God, you have zero ability... you have nothing to give... you have nothing to offer... you have zip. Why does that matter? ...Because there are still people that have gotten saved. Why? ...Because God did it. God reached out and found spiritually dead people, and He looked around and He went, "That one right there. He's mine." ... and brings him out. He chooses people. In the Old Testament, God chooses a people and brings them out. In the New Testament, God chooses a bigger people; it's called the Church. Guess what? If you're here today and you're a believer in Christ, there was a moment ... I want you to just think about this for a second... when you were dead spiritually and you did nothing of your own will or volition, and yet supernaturally God chose you.

Ephesians 1:4 tells us that before the foundations of the earth, God looked down, He saw you, and He picked you. He pursued you. He wanted you. In Jesus Christ, God pursued humanity... The Incarnation... coming down to earth and pursued people saying, "You're broken in your sins; you have nothing to offer Me, yet I want you anyway. I want you to meditate for just a second on the fact that you were sinful and broken and God picked you. If that doesn't fire you up... man... I've got nothing for you today because that is massive. That is a miracle. People say, "Why don't we see miracles anymore?" "You ARE a miracle!" You were saved in Christ. Listen to me. God chose you before the foundations of the world. He saved you. That is a miracle of His grace.

Now guess what? We're going to talk about another miracle that is happening right now. Some of us are here today, and we're not believers in Christ. We are saying, "I don't even know why I'm at church today. I don't even really like church. I just got up and felt like I was supposed to go. I got in the car and I drove here." Do you know why? Because there's this thing called the Holy Spirit, and do you know what It's doing? It is working on you right now. Yeah. When you woke up this morning... you were a marked man or woman. God had His eye on you and brought you here. Why did He do it? You are not here by

accident. It is not per chance that you are here. You are here because God is working in your heart, and He is softening your heart. He is doing that because He wants you to understand something. He wants to tell you about His love for you today. God to pursuing you in Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, He is coming after you. There are miracles happening all around this room because there are people that today, at this end of the campus and at the other end of the campus, are being spiritually prepared in their heart. This is happening.

I talked to my friends who live in Muslim countries who are missionaries, and they say that God is using visions... supernatural kind of crazy stuff. They will be sitting at home and people will come to their house and they will knock on their door (knocking sound). And they will answer the door and there will be a person standing there and they will say, "I had a dream last night, of Jesus, and He told me to come to this house and talk to you and ask you about Jesus." Now that's weird. Why does that happen? That is not because we had a really good church marketing strategy. Right? That is just because of the Holy Spirit. I talked to another guy who was telling me about this woman who was sharing her frustration. She said, "I'm tired of my preacher always telling me to share my faith in my workplace. I've been doing that for three years and nobody has come to Christ." He said, "You know what? Why don't we change strategies. Why don't you stop sharing the Gospel and start praying for your coworkers to be drawn unto Jesus." She said, "Well, that seems pretty weird. You're not even going to talk about Him?" He said, "No. Just start praying for them." Six weeks later, she prayed for this coworker every day. This woman walks across the parking lot, flags her down, hops in the passenger side, sits down, and says, "I know this is going to sound really weird, but I feel like I'm supposed to ask you to tell me about Jesus. Why is that?" This happened last week. Why does that kind of stuff happen? ...Because God is preparing the hearts of people. Listen; right now you're saying, "Am I really supposed to be here?" And the answer is unequivocally "Yes." You are not here by accident. Either God has brought you here today because He wants to save you, or God has brought you here today because He wants to keep working on your heart... or you're here because God wants you to hear something today from His Word so that you will be obedient unto it. That is it. You are here for a reason. God wants you to be worked on today by His Word.

So, with that given, you look at Philip and you see a man with an unlikely background... an unlikely race, from an unlikely place, who did an unlikely thing to go and worship a God that really was unlikely his own culture so that under unlikely circumstances a man could come and preach to him. Why? ...Because the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ was at work. The reason that I bring that up is that even right now, today, God is working in these same circumstances. God is working in you as well. This is what I want you to hear. God isn't just working in the spiritual seeker, preparing that heart, making that fertile soil, giving us this place where the seed, the Word of God, can be planted and it can take root.

2. The Spirit's Leadership Of The Speaker (v. 26)

God is also working in the heart of the speaker. Maybe you say, "I'm already a believer. I'm already one who believes in Christ. What is God doing?" Well, do you know what He's doing? He's working in you and he's saying, "I want you to draw close to Me, I want you to be intimate with Me so that I can whisper to you and tell you where to go and what to do to share the Word of the Lord.

Look to verse 26: *"An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and said 'Go down this road into Gaza and go share the Gospel.'*" Let me give you the translation: "Go out into the boonies and there's going to be this person I want you to meet there." We wouldn't do that, would we? "I don't think so, Jesus. I'm not going to be into that." Out there in the middle of nowhere? I really had my sights on a really metropolitan area with

a lot of people where I could really do that." No; God says, "I want you to go to this place and I want you to share the Gospel. I'm going to speak to you through my Holy Spirit, and I want you to be obedient unto it." And Philip does it. Now why does that matter? It matters because God is preparing His people that are already saved to go and to preach the Gospel, but do you know what you have to do to be able to do that? You have to be close enough and quiet enough to listen. You see, God finds great pleasure in using His children for His purposes. And do you know what? God's children... once you've been used by God, you will find great pleasure in being used by God. He loves to use His children, and His children love to be used. If you've ever had the glorious opportunity to preach the Gospel and to lead someone to faith in Christ, when that happens, you just walk away joyful saying, "Wow! God, thank you for choosing me; Thank you for using me." It's an incredible feeling to be used, and God gets the glory and gets pleasure whenever His children are obedient unto that listening. But guess what? He kind of whispers and you have to be close to hear.

On Wednesday night, I'm teaching this class on how to study your Bible. We talked about this... David Platt, we're watching one of his videos and he shared in this video. We talked about it a little bit at the marriage conference. There's a lot of people who don't ever hear from God, and the reason that they don't ever hear from God is that they are having a vicarious relationship with Jesus.

Let me talk to you about this. Let's pretend that I invited someone to come move into my house and to relate to Joy for me. At the end of every day, I would have a meeting with this person, "So... tell me about my wife." He'd be like, "Well, you know, she seems really nice. She's great. She's a good cook. Man... we really like her and she seems to be a wicked bargain shopper... Man... she could tear a Marshall's up. That is awesome." (Laughter) This kind of stuff. I'd say, "Man, that's awesome. I'll meet back with you tomorrow, and I'll talk to you about her tomorrow." And what if I never actually had a relationship with my wife, but I would just talk to this individual, and this individual would be the one to tell me about that. What would happen? Well, number one, I'd probably get divorced. But, number two... on top of that... I would never actually really know my wife. Listen to me, friends. There are a lot of Christians who have a vicarious relationship with Jesus Christ. They depend on coming in this room and having me tell them about their Jesus. Uhh uhhh... You are missing out. If you want to hear and have a relationship with Jesus Christ, this is His mouthpiece, and His Holy Spirit speaks to you. If you want to hear from Him, get in His Word. You've got to be close enough to listen. You've got to be close enough to Him to hear... Don't settle for a vicarious relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead, go to the horse's mouth. Go straight to the Holy Spirit, let Him speak to you and whisper to you, but you've got to be close.

My wife doesn't really like tomato juice. It's kind of a taste thing. It's just not her thing. Oddly enough, I really love it. It's one of my favorite things. We had these friends who would have these really nice dinner parties, and they would invite us over. But whenever they would, they would serve this kind of spicy tomato juice cocktail. I think it was supposed to be like a Bloody Mary, but it had no alcohol in it, so they would give it to us. Joy was always like, "How do I politely decline this?" I don't know why, but just because husbands and wives do this sort of thing, I made it kind of a joke to try and create a diversion every time we would go to one of these parties. When they were looking the other way, I would grab my wife's glass and just suck it down real quick. Because I thought it was kind of funny and I enjoyed doing that. So they never knew, even though we knew these guys for years, that Joy didn't really like the tomato juice. It was just always something funny we'd do. They'd invite us to a party... there was the tomato juice... make a distraction... suck it down. So we go over one night and they're going to have this really nice dinner party. So I'm in my suit and my wife is in her dress and there are six or seven couples there, and we're all going to eat together. We're sitting in their really nice sitting area, and we're having this very formal, nice

conversation and they bring around... guess what?... the spicy tomato juice cocktail, so I'm already kind of thinking in my mind how I'm going to do this and be funny about it. But then they also bring around... I want to say they were cookies but they're not because they were not sweet at all. They were these savory snacks but they're pressed down, and they're made out of parmesan cheese and baked. I'm looking at this and I say, "Hmm, I wonder what this is?" So, we're having this polite conversation, and I just take a really nice-sized bite of this hors d'oeuvres, I guess we'll call it. I take a bite of this, and I realize it is filled with red pepper flakes which means it is really spicy. So, I'm like, "Whoa..." My eyes are watering up a little bit; I'm getting a little bit of sweat down there on my face, so I reach over and I grab my tomato juice and I am putting out the flame. I'm going after it and I'm drinking it, and a lot of things start to happen very quickly... simultaneously... at this time. As I am drinking this, I notice Joy now is reaching for her hors d'oeuvre... and it's like everything starts to move in slow motion... and I see it going toward her mouth and it's right there. All I can think in my mind... all these things start to go through my mind... "She's going to take a bite of this, it's going to be super spicy, and she's going to have nothing to drink. She's either going to drink this tomato juice and then going to vomit because it's really going to be bad." She's in a really nice dress and I'm in a suit. That's not really optimal for this moment, so then I look around and I think, "The only other thing she could do is run into the kitchen and just put her mouth underneath the tap and just start to drink." So I'm like, "That's really not optimal either. I've got to do something." Quick as a wink, I finished drinking this... I put my glass down, I'm sitting next to her on the couch. I get as close as I can and almost imperceptibly... as the hors d'oeuvre is dangling dangerously above her lips... I say, as quietly as possible so as not to be heard by the other guests, (whispering) "Don't eat that." (Laughter) And you would be amazed, but somehow we were in such synchronicity in that moment that my wife has it right here, and she stops and she hears and she freezes... It was weird... just like in a movie... the tiniest crumb fell and landed on her tongue and you could see her eyes widen... "Oh ho... I see what's happening here" She takes it and very politely puts it down. Now why do I bring that up? If she had not been right next to me, she never would have heard that.

I'm telling you this: So many of us are going, "Why don't I ever hear from the Holy Spirit?" Do you know why? "...Because He's way over there and you're way over here." Okay, now; that's not really true. You're like, "Well, the Holy Spirit is with me all the time." You know what I'm saying. You don't spend time with Him. You don't nestle up to Him. You don't open His Word. You don't have a relationship with Him. You depend on me or another pastor. Maybe a really great Bible teacher that you've known for years or maybe a Life Group leader to be the one to tell you about who Christ is, instead of pursuing Him yourself into the Word of God. If You pursue God into His Word, then guess what? He will speak to you, and I can tell you of instances in my life when this has happened.

I could tell you about the time that I went to Sears to buy a lawnmower and the guy who was checking me out there was covered in tattoos and piercings and this kind of thing, and the Holy Spirit clearly says to me, "Tell him about Me right now." I'm like, "Yeah.... You know Lord... this is kind of a desert place, so I don't really know if You're aware of that." Or I can tell you about the other day whenever I heard that Torchy's Tacos had opened up over near my house, so I drove over there to go get me a Monk Special, and while I was there having it, Sandy (the front-end manager) walked up and I felt the Lord telling me, "You need to invite her to church right now." I thought, "Okay, that's a little bit weird." Or I could tell you about my friend Jim who lived next door to me whenever we rented our townhouse before we bought a house whenever we moved to Houston and how I prayed for Jim. I prayed that he would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I could tell you about how the Lord gave me the opportunity 48 hours before Jim passed away to stand at his bedside in the hospital and share the Gospel with him. How does that kind

of stuff happen? It happens because you're listening and when the Holy Spirit whispers and nudges, you say, "Seems kinda crazy but okay."

You see, here's the thing. It's that one of the reasons that spiritual seekers don't come to faith in Christ isn't because they're being disobedient to what the Lord is telling them... we're being disobedient to what the Lord is telling us, and we're not saying "Yes." ...Because God is calling us, very gently and very quietly, to go and to share our knowledge of Him with those who are spiritually seeking. This is the crazy thing: The spiritual seeker, they're the low-hanging fruit... they're the one that's teed up... they're ready, they're asking the questions, and yet nevertheless, so many times we will disobediently say, "I just don't want to feel awkward." What a shame. What if Philip had never ever said, "I'll go down that road."

Did you know that there's only two places in Scripture in the New Testament where we hear about a single person coming to faith in Christ? One of them is in Acts chapter 8, and the other one is in Acts chapter 9. Saul who became the greatest church planter of all time. In Acts chapter 8, one other single solitary individual comes to faith in Christ. It's the Ethiopian eunuch. Church history says that he actually carried the Gospel into Africa, and that's how the Gospel made it there in the first place. When God tells you to go speak to someone, you have no idea what His plans are to do in the life of that person and in the life of the Church. He wants to do something.

3. Allows Jesus to Connect. (v. 30)

The Spirit of Jesus is preparing the hearer, and the Spirit of Jesus is preparing the speaker, if we'll just listen and be ready. But it's more than that. It's also that Jesus wants to then connect and bring everything together. Now look at this: He's sitting there and he's reading the Book of Isaiah. Now that's crazy that he's reading the Book of Isaiah. We live in a world where everybody has a Bible or a phone app, but listen... in those days, nobody... nobody had access to Scripture, so somehow this guy has enough resources that he purchases a scroll, and he's reading it out loud. Philip is so obedient that he goes down this road and he sees a giant entourage and a chariot... wealthy people... and God says, "Go over there to it" and he does it anyway. He runs up to the chariot and as he's there he hears... because he's obedient... he hears now the eunuch doing what people in the ancient world did when they read... reading aloud. He's reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53, and as he reads he hears a passage and Philip says, "*Do you understand what you are reading?*" What does the eunuch say? The eunuch says to Philip, "*How can I unless someone guides me?*"... verse 31. "*How can I unless someone guides me?*"

Now the Greek word there for "guide" is "hodegeo." "Hodegeo" is different: It's not teacher, it's not instructor. I think most of the time when we think of someone explaining the Gospel, we're thinking of a proclaimer or preacher or teacher, but that's not what the word is here. It's the word "guide." In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus uses this same word to talk about blind guides who are leading others who are also blind. It's the idea of someone who takes you somewhere, who's leading you somewhere. You know, the thing about a guide is... Think about a guide. A guide is someone who takes you where you already want to go. Right?

A couple of years ago, my brother and I won a guided fishing trip on a lake up near our home town. You know, we had gone fishing on this lake many times. We had a great time. Every time we did it, we'd catch a few fish and we'd come home, but I had never fished with a guide. Do you know what's different? The guide knows where the fish are. We get in the boat... I mean, man... he drove us to this place, we're throwing our reel out... Boom, we're pulling in bass as fast as we can. It was crazy. And then suddenly they

stopped biting. He said, "Oh, they moved." They moved? And he knew. He took us to another place. Boom. We throw in the bait there, and the next thing we know, we start catching fish superfast there. He knew what we wanted, we wanted to catch fish, and he knew where to fish were, so he took us right where we wanted to go.

On our tenth anniversary, Joy and I had an opportunity to go to Yellowstone National Park, and we got to do one of the coolest things I've ever gotten to do. I got to tour Yellowstone National Park on a snowmobile. It was nuts; it was so cool. We had this guide. The guide knew where we wanted to go. We wanted to see Yellowstone National Park. We didn't know a thing about it. If we had set off on that by ourselves, do you know what would have happened? I would have been bear food. I mean, I would have been in trouble. Right? But because I had a guide, she took us where we wanted to go. She showed us Old Faithful, she showed us Lake Yellowstone, she showed us the lava-heated pools. She showed us all kinds of cool stuff, and we were in awe about this because the guide knew where we wanted to go and just took us there. Even though we couldn't verbalize it, even though we couldn't articulate it, she knew what we wanted. Guides take you where you already want to go.

The eunuch says, "How can I understand unless someone guides me?" He was in God's Word. He wanted to understand God's Word. He just needed someone to say, "Show me where I need to go; walk me through this." Do you want to know what I think? I think that many of us never share our faith because we don't see ourselves as guides leading people where they already want to go. We think of ourselves as door-to-door salesmen. You see, what we think is that we've got to convince people to take something that they really don't want. We think if we can come up with the perfect sales pitch, maybe we can convince them to spend money they really don't want to spend, but that is not what is happening in Acts chapter 8. What is happening here is he's looking for someone to guide him. He already has these questions. He's already in God's Word. "Please just lead me to that place." Now listen; I want to be very clear. This is not every person out there. Not every person is a spiritual seeker, but some people, God is already working on their hearts, God is already drawing them in, and because He is already doing that, guess what? They just need a guide to get them from point A to point B. "Can you show me the way? You don't have to convince me. You don't have to do a hard sales job but just be open-minded enough, be listening closely enough so that when I have my spiritual questions and you can hear, 'Oh... you need a guide,' then I can be the guide for you in that situation." Stop trying to be a door-to-door, high-pressure salesman and start being a guide.

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus sends out His disciples, and they go into different villages to share the Gospel. What does He tell them to do in the villages that don't want to hear the message? Do you remember this? He tells them to take their sandals off, shake the dust from their feet, put them back on, and head on down the road. Does that mean that God doesn't love those people? No. Do you know what it means? It means they're not ready yet. Too many of us are spending too much of our energy trying to sell people something who don't want it. Go to the next town. Go to the next person. That's okay. Why? ...Because God is working in hearts. That doesn't mean that you don't pray for your lost family member. It doesn't mean that you don't love them. It doesn't mean you keep pursuing after them. Listen. God will work in their hearts when God works in their hearts, and we've got to trust that to Him. So what do we do? We keep loving them. We keep faithfully presenting the Gospel as best as we can, but we give our best energy to the places where God is moving. If God is opening up hearts in other places, do you know what we do? "I'm going to be a guide for you right now. I'm going to share this with you, and I'm going to trust that God will work in those other hearts when God works in those other hearts, on His time table. I'm going to keep loving, I'm going to keep being faithful, but the place where God is working, that is the

place where I'm going to be." He needed a guide and so Philip became his guide right there in that moment.

4. And Create Response (v. 36)

So, why does that matter? It matters this, because he was reading from the prophet Isaiah and he said, "Do you know what? I'm going to show you." The Bible says that he started with that very passage of Scripture, and he told him the Good News about Jesus. Verse 35: *"...beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus."* Jesus is the connecting point for the entire Bible. Now listen. When you read Scripture and you start diving into Scripture, this is what I want you to do. I want you to read Scripture with an eye of "How does this point toward the Gospel?" or "How does this inform me and look back upon the Gospel?" ...Because guess what? Every major section of Scripture does this... Every single piece. There is no part of the Bible that doesn't either look forward to Jesus or look back upon Jesus, because Jesus Christ is the Gospel. He is the centerpiece. He is the thing, in and of itself. So why does that matter? Whenever people are reading the Book of Genesis and they are looking at creation, you can say, "This looks forward to a creating, loving God who would soon send a way to redeem His entire creation." When you read Exodus and you see the Passover, you can go, "Oh... this points toward God delivering from slavery." When you read the Book of Leviticus and you see the sacrificial system, you can go, "Oh, this points to Jesus ending the sacrifice." All of Scripture is read by and interpreted by Jesus Christ. So whenever you have friends who are saying, "How do I understand the Bible?" Your answer is "Jesus." Now, you may not immediately see it but you can, if you look, begin with whatever passage of Scripture they have questions about, and you can lead them right to Christ... you can walk them right down that road to Jesus because, you see, He is the answer that they need in that particular moment.

James Allan Francis... I read this great quote today that said this: "All the armies that ever marched and all the navies that ever sailed and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man and upon this earth as powerfully as has this one solitary life of Jesus." There is no government, there is no army that will ever affect the world as much as what God has done in Jesus Christ. So when you read Scripture, whenever you open up your Bible, you are reading God telling you about His salvific work in Christ. Whenever your friends have questions about it, you can help lead them to it. Maybe your friends open up other texts... maybe it's not the Bible. Maybe they are of another religion or they're searching, and they're looking at Hindu texts or Buddhist texts or whatever, and you can say to them, "Listen... here's the thing that I know. That believes a different thing that teaches a different truth than what my Book teaches, but let me tell you how it's different, because my Book is always pointing toward Jesus Christ."

My fifth grader this week comes home from school and he says, "Dad, I found out that two of my really good friends at school are Hindu." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yah, so I started talking to them about it." Now this is just blowing me away, right? ... my fifth grader... he's talking to his Hindu friends about Jesus. I said, "So what did you find out?" He said, "I found out that they believe in all kinds of gods." I said, "Okay." And what did you say?" He said, "Well I told them, we believe in only one God and that one God is Jesus." I was like, "Man! That's awesome." (Clapping) It's pretty cool, right? The reason I bring that up is this: If my fifth grader can figure out a way to communicate the difference between Hinduism and Christianity, I bet you can too. So this is the reason I want to bring this up. Revival didn't break out at Frank Elementary this week; it wasn't anything like that, but he just heard that there were people who had questions. Do you know what I thought? I wondered how God will faithfully use this in the life of these two boys that are Hindu over the next 30 years. Right? ...Because this is the first conversation they probably

had where they heard that there is a religion called Christianity that believes in only one God and that God is named Jesus. And how will God build on that for the next 30 years? I have no idea but do you know what? I bet He will because my son was faithful in that moment. You don't have to be the person to push the ball across the goal line, but you do have to be faithful when it's your turn to go on the field and run your play. If you don't do the thing that God has called you to do in that moment, then you're leaving it short.

So he gets to the end of sharing the Gospel in verse 36: *"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?'"* So they go down into the water right there, and he is baptized in that moment. I mean, it's pretty incredible. Why did that happen? ...Because once the spiritual seeker, the eunuch, heard about Jesus, he understood. "It's time for me to make a decision." Spiritual seekers in this room... I want to tell you why it is that we're here today. We're here today because we believe all meaning and all power and all glory in the universe centers on what the God of the universe did in one Man named Jesus Christ. I want to tell you about it. This is what happened:

God created the world, and God picked a people and that people is named "Israel." In Israel, God sent them a Messiah, a Chosen One, to show them the way and the fulfillment of their kingdom. His name was Jesus. But God did something else in that person Jesus. Do you know what He did? He lived a sinless, perfect life and He also did this. He said, "I'm going to open up faith in Me to not just a chosen people now but to anyone who would have faith in My Son. That Man Jesus was fully God, and He walked the earth." He was completely sinless and He told about the life in the Kingdom. He talked about forgiveness and love and peace and all these things that were found through faith in God through grace. But then, looking down on this world that's completely broken and completely sinful, God recognized that every person who had sinned, even His own people Israel would never be able to have a relationship with Him because God is holy and perfect, and they could never ever have true fellowship with him, so He had to make a way for them. So this sinless Man ended years of sacrificed animals and bulls and sheep and all that kind of stuff, and He died a single death on the cross. Why did that happen? That happened because in that moment God, in flesh, took all of your sin... He took all of my sin... He took all of the sin of people in the past and all of the sin of the people in the future, and they were compacted and placed onto the shoulders of Jesus Christ, of God's Son. In fact, Scripture tells us, *"He became sin who knew no sin,"* and in that moment the Chosen One of Israel, the Messiah, died. Why did He die? He died so that all of your sin and my sin might be punished but instead of me being punished, He took the punishment for me. Now, the reason that this is beautiful is that some people would mock this God and they would say, "This God has no power because He died. What kind of God actually dies." Well, do you know what kind of God dies? The same God that has the power to raise the dead. And three days later, this Jesus Christ, we believe, was raised from the dead by the power of His heavenly Father. Why does that matter? Well, it matters for a few reasons. Number one, it shows that he has power over sin. Number two, it shows that He has power over death. But number three, it means this: We believe that if that God has the power to raise Jesus from the dead, then He has the power to raise US from the dead. So, if we put faith in Jesus Christ, then guess what? Not only has my sin been forgiven, but one day my rotten dead body will be raised and given new life. Whenever Jesus Christ returns, it will be glorified and fulfilled. You say, "That seems absolutely nuts and crazy." Guess what? It sounds like it except for one thing. It's true because it's written in this Book. Now this is what I want you to know. If you are not a believer, today, you are not here by accident. God brought you in for one reason... so that you could hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and so that today, right now, you could have the opportunity to respond.

You see, this is the crazy thing. Even though we're spiritually dead and even though God draws people unto Himself... I can't quite understand this and I wish I could... but Scripture seems to teach this: That God puts life into you to hear the truth and to be brought to a certain point, but then there comes this moment where you actually have to decide. I don't understand it but He extends it out to you, and then He says, "Now you decide... do you want to receive this or not?" That's a great mystery to me. I can't fully and completely comprehend that but listen... There are people in this room that are saying, "I don't know if I have purpose in life. You have a purpose and that purpose is found that God made you and He loves you and He gives you purpose in Jesus Christ. Others of you are saying, "I have sin and shame in my background" or "I've been sexually abused" or "I've been terrible to my family" or "I'm someone who is forgotten" or "I'm an orphan." Listen to me. There is no sin and there is no shame in your life because God has declared you as saved, righteous, and His child in Jesus Christ. Others of you say, "But I've got a big sin or a big addiction in my life." Well, guess what? Addiction is broken in the power of Christ, and sin is broken in the power of Christ. All that was killed on the cross and in faith with Him, all of that is overcome. Some of you say, "But I'm looking for joy. Will I find joy in Christ?" Yes... you will find happiness and joy... Joy that is supreme because once you put your faith in Christ, you now know you are loved, you are received, you are accepted. You don't have to do anything to impress. Listen. You don't have to perform. You don't have to do anything. He's already loved and received you. You just have to say "Yes".

So he gets to that moment and the eunuch says, "Look... here's water! Why can't I be baptized right now?" So they pull over and he is baptized. Now, why baptism? Is that kinda weird? Why is that? ...Because it's a very powerful teaching. You go down into the water... enough water to cover yourself up because it symbolizes that this is a thing that takes over my entire life. You go down into the water because you're symbolizing in that moment that, just as Jesus was laid low in the tomb, my old life is now being buried and put to death. And then as you come up out of the water, you say, "Just as Jesus Christ was raised from death, now I'm raised from the death of sin and into the life of Christ." It's wet and it's water because you are reminded that your sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. Sometimes I will tell people, it's like putting on your wedding band. When you put it on, you're publicly declaring "I belong to someone." Today in the first service, this is what I said: "Hey, you know what? I felt, as I was writing this sermon, that the Lord said, "Give people an opportunity to get baptized today." So do you know what I did in the first service? I said, "Alright, I brought my swimsuit." If anybody today either says:

- A. I have been a believer for years, but I've never followed in obedience to be baptized.
- B. Today, right now, I have decided "Yes, I want Jesus Christ."

Then guess what? I'll baptize you. In the first service, I baptized two people. (Clapping) Praise God for that! Now, I set a personal goal of 25, so... 23 of you... (Laughter) No, I'm just kidding. So here's the deal. I want you to know this. If you are here today and it's time for you to be baptized, we want to baptize you. My friend Monica is on our baptism team. Here she is, right over here. Monica, do you want to come over here where we can kind of see you real quick? I know... you're probably not wanting to do that but here you are. This is Monica here on the baptism team. Alright. (Clapping) So if you want to be baptized here in just a moment, here's what's going to happen. We're going to have people down here at the front to pray and all that kind of stuff, and any of them can help you as well, but if you see Monica and you already know, "I'm ready; it's time for me to be baptized"... you go follow her and guess what? We've got swim suits. We've got robes. We've got tee shirts... we've got clothing... all different sizes. All you do is come to her, and she's going to get you situated. After this service is over, I'm going to change into my swimsuit, and we're going to have a baptismal service right out here at our baptistry. So, if some people come, do

you know what we're going to need you to do? We need some of you guys to go out there and to watch this because we got a little rowdy out there at the baptism earlier. We're clapping... I lost my ring. It was exciting. There was diving going on. It was good stuff. So you're going to need to come on out there and do that. Alright. Thanks Monica; I appreciate it.

So this is what's going to happen: Right now you have an opportunity to respond. If you are ready to say "Yes" to Jesus Christ, all you have to do at the end of this service is come forward and say, "Okay, I know; I'm ready to receive Christ." If you're ready to be baptized, we will baptize you today, and right now you can say, "Look. There's water! What prevents me from being baptized right now?"

So here's what we're going to do. Let's all just bow our heads and we're going to pray. We're going to ask God and we're going to trust the Holy Spirit... We're going to say, "God, Your Holy Spirit has been preparing hearts and, God, Your Holy Spirit has been preparing the preacher and, Lord, Your Word is always relevant. I don't have to make it relevant because it already is. So what we're going to do right now is we're just going to pray and we're going to say, "Lord, if You are drawing people unto Yourself, we're going to let You operate." So... every head bowed, every eye closed. I just want to pray for you. If you would say right now, "Okay. I'm thinking that God is speaking to me today. Maybe today is the day that I need to say 'Yes' to Jesus." I want to pray over you. This is not a commitment. You're saying, "I'm feeling it." I want to pray over you. Would you raise your hand? I want to pray for you right now. Who needs me to pray for them? Alright... there's a hand. Who else? Okay... there are several going up. Who else? There's others. Alright... good. Who else? I'm going to pray for you right now.

"Lord, I see these hands and You see them. Lord, You see into their hearts. God, I pray that You give them the courage to come forward and to say 'Yes' to You. And Father, not only to say 'Yes' to You but to say 'Yes' to a life in You that starts in this moment but is completely transformative. God, I pray that they would have the courage to do so. Father, I also just want to pray for people that are here today that maybe they need to be bolder in sharing their faith. They need to move from a sales pitch to a time to guide. Father, they need to listen and they need to be close to You so they can stop living vicariously but instead they can live directly with You through Your Word and Your Spirit. Father, I pray that You would have Your way with us in this time and in this place. God, I ask it in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."