

Introduction

- Evangelism often something that scares us
 - for **other people** to do...
 - induces **guilt** in us...
- Do people who are "**good**" at it intimidate us?
- Philip as our example
 - not to **intimidate**, but to **teach** and **inspire** us!

The Ethiopian is a person

- The Ethiopian is a person
 - not simply an object to be evangelised
- He has:
 - a **background** - Ethiopian; from Upper Nile area; quite possibly a Jew or influenced by the Jewish dispersion
 - a **job** - Candace is a title for Queen Mother, who did a lot of the running of the kingdom; so her treasurer would have been something like the chancellor of the exchequer; his "eunuch" status may simply refer to him being a civil servant, rather than having been actually castrated
 - a **spiritual story** - he has come to worship; God is already at work in him; he is already reading the Scriptures
- People we seek to reach for Christ are not trophies, statistics, bums on seats!
 - they are people, and we need to treat them as such;
 - listen to people, get to know them, go out of our way to get to know people around us
 - even as **Philip clearly listened to the Ethiopian** - look at all he found out that we have here recorded!

Philip was alert to opportunities

- Philip didn't simply come and share small-talk with this Ethiopian:
 - he looked for opportunities to go deeper, to listen to what really mattered to this man and share what really mattered to him
 - he asked a question that opened up the possibility of sharing his faith
 - **do you understand what you are reading?**
 - *like a can opener, question opened things up!*
- At one of the seminars at School of Evangelism in Stirling someone shared a question they've found helpful:
 - **"do you have a faith that helps you, or are you not sure about these things yet?"**
- It may be that in established relationships it is harder to open things out into new areas:
 - but even if we don't have opportunities to ask such direct questions, we should always be striving to listen and **ask supportively about the things that really matter to people** - family, friendships, problems...
- Philip **listened** and then he **asked**

Philip Explained the Gospel

- Sometimes opportunities just come, almost unlooked for:
 - a gift from God!
 - a situation where you almost can't help yourself explaining the gospel
- I find this whole area of giving personal testimony to Christ hard:
 - I don't know whether its a male reserve, or fear, or what...
 - ... but I rarely find myself explaining my faith; and when I am it has most often been because of some job or external function that has shaped the opportunity (minister, mission team member, etc)

- And I don't have a personal story of being able to share my faith in this kind of way
- I can only tell of an occasion when through a school assembly the opportunity was there to explain, presented on a plate:
 - Big Brother, first series; "Nasty Nick", brought back to give prizes as his redemption, buying favour by good deeds. Then there was the winner, whose purpose in going into the house was to give that which he won to someone else (relative or friend with Downs Syndrome)
- Glorious opportunity - kids were right into it - that particular opportunity will never come again!
- We need to understand enough of the gospel to explain it:
 - (so learn, study, ask - go to someone you respect in the congregation and ask them "how do you explain the gospel when someone asks you?")
 - but we also need to grasp the opportunities that come to explain the good news, even if we don't feel we know enough!
 - we know enough to have faith ourselves; that's enough!
- Here, the passage is a God-send: pointer to Jesus' death as a sacrificial lamb in the place of sinners!
 - and that is at the heart of the gospel!

Philip Looked for Commitment

- Not just a "that's interesting!" response!
 - aim for disciple, baptism, public sign of his commitment - in front of his entourage!!
- He looked for it, took it when that desire to commit came, but didn't push or back him into a corner!

Conclusion

- In this incident, everything is telescoped into a very brief encounter!
 - this won't be the normal pattern, but it does highlight some important principles to apply as we seek to bear individual witness to those around us...
- Cultivate obedience - so we end up in the right place at the right time!
 - that may as much be sticking with people over the long haul as asking God to guide you which bus to take today!
- Treat people as people, not evangelistic cannon fodder!
 - care about them; they matter to God, they should matter to us
- Learn to be alert to opportunities - ask questions, listen
 - we're far too good at talking, and not nearly good enough at listening
- Explain the gospel when we have the chance - take a deep breath and speak; very few people actually bite!
- Finally, in all of this our goal is to bring people to a full commitment to Christ, knowing that this is the best for them
 - this is hard, since it is a "big ask" - we are asking and aiming that people will, as we do, bend the knee to Christ's lordship!

Result?

- rejoicing!