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The above is a map that shows something of Philip the Evangelists journey, through the numbers 1-7!

DISCOVERING THE IDENTITY OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT!
ACTS CH8:26-40

ILLUSTRATION

What do you do if the business you are working for is thriving, everything is perfect, and you are then told by your boss to leave, not knowing who or what or where the next job is?

GOD'S LEADING! V26-28

Luke now records for us **three** different conversions, The Ethiopian Eunuch – Ch8:26-40, Paul – Ch9:1-19, and Cornelius – Ch10:1-48, **all separated by culture, race/ethnicity and religion, but saved, changed and unified by the Gospel!**

According to John Stott “The man from that region to whom Luke introduces us was not only a eunuch (as were most courtiers at that period) but an important official in charge of all the treasure of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (27). Candace is known to have been not a personal name but a dynastic title for the Queen Mother who performed certain functions on behalf of the King. The Ethiopian Official to whom Philip was sent was her treasurer or chancellor of the exchequer, presumably a black African. But he had gone to Jerusalem to worship, a pilgrim at one of the annual festivals, and now on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the scroll of Isaiah the prophet (28)” (John Stott Commentary on Acts pg 160).

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH?

1. V26 – He is travelling back to Africa and Ethiopia a distance of around 1200 miles, this is where Cush (Gen Ch10:6 - one of Ham's sons) settled in Africa. Many of Israel's enemies came from the line of Ham – Egyptians, Babylonians, Philistines, and various Canaanite groups! Cush fathered Nimrod, the first on earth to be a mighty man!
2. V27 – He was a Eunuch – castrated (remove the testicles of a man) or from birth, and therefore unable to enter the assembly of God (**Deut Ch23:1 – No-one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord!**)
3. Although there was hope for such a person – **Isaiah Ch56:3-5!**
4. V27 – He was very important, the Chancellor of the Exchequer!
5. V27 – A spiritual man, worshipping in Jerusalem!
6. V28 – A spiritual hungry man, reading the Scriptures!

God leads Philip, who at this point does not yet know what God has planned as God has not yet revealed it, from Samaria where things are taking off Ch8:12 + Ch8:17, to the boiling hot desert of Gaza 60 miles away, at midday (v6 – south meaning midday), to a place where the Gospel had not yet been preached!

THE SPIRIT'S LEADING! V29-38

Philip arrives on the main road between Jerusalem and Gaza, a place defined in v27 as a “desert place.” Hot, arid, dusty, with no other real information that is going to be helpful! Not until v29!

V29 – God the Holy Spirit leads – “Go over and join this Chariot”! Philip does so, and asks a simple question, and then receives a great invitation! Philip responds to the invitation and explains who Jesus is from the Old Testament Scriptures, starting where the Eunuch is reading. **Where is the Eunuch reading from?**

Isaiah Ch53:7-8. To understand the context of the passage, one should really read from Ch52:13 – Ch53:12, because the passage is all about “**THE SUFFERING SERVANT.**” The servant is submissive and silent before those who would oppress and afflict Him. He is humiliated to the point where He receives no justice, and pays the ultimate price with His life for the sins of the world by dying on the cross!

As the Eunuch hears about the identity of “**THE SUFFERING SERVANT**”, at some point between v35+v36 the Ethiopian Eunuch gives His Life to Christ, a superb example of the ideal conversion! The reality is, God gives the Ethiopian Eunuch, three gifts! The Scriptures v30, a teacher in Philip v35 **and Salvation in Jesus in v37**, are you reading carefully? The Eunuch then gets baptised by Philip, revealing the inside transformation

that has taken place and he goes away rejoicing! ***The Eunuch may now be far off from Jerusalem, but he is no longer far off from His Christ!***

Philip did not know what the Spirit had in store for him, but demonstrates a willingness to follow the prompting of the Spirit! This obedience to the work of the Spirit results in another person hearing the Gospel and being saved!

THE SPIRIT'S LEADING AGAIN! V39-40

Why was Philip taken away by the Spirit? **V40** - Because there were more evangelistic opportunities! He travels initially a further 20 miles before, travelling again around 50-60 miles, settling in Caesarea (Acts Ch21:6-8).

Why does Luke include this story in Acts? Now what is the point of this story?

What does he want us to get out of this inspired story — since (as Paul says), "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16)? How does this Scripture equip us for every good work?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the strong, Bible-based expository preacher of Westminster Chapel in London for almost 30 years between 1939 and 1968 used the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch to illustrate just this point. He cautioned against misuse, but he said, "Here again is a most extraordinary subject, and indeed a very fascinating one, and, from many angles, a most glorious one. There is no question but that God's people can look for and expect **"leadings," "guidance," "indications of what they are meant to do."** There are many examples of this in the Scriptures and I take one at random. You remember the story in Acts Ch8:26ff, of how Philip the Evangelist was told by the angel of the Lord, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert". . .

Now there are leadings such as that . . . If you read the history of the saints, God's people throughout the centuries and especially the history of revivals, you will find that this is something which is perfectly clear and definite—men have been told by the Holy Spirit to do something; they knew it was the Holy Spirit speaking to them, and it transpired that it obviously was His leading. It seems clear to me that if we deny such a possibility we are again guilty of quenching the Spirit (*The Sovereign Spirit*, pp. 89–90)."

The Scriptures are wonderfully sufficient, they protect us from the error of thinking that the only way God guides us in good work is by reasoning and planning from circumstances and principles (though this is good), and they show us that there are works God may lead us to do by means of extraordinary guidance. And since there is no teaching anywhere in the New Testament that says this work of the Lord is limited to the time of the Book of Acts, we should assume that one of God's ways today of building His Church is to give direction to His people in extraordinary ways as well as more ordinary ones.

Scripture gives us all we need for two things:

1. It gives all the authoritative truth (trusted) we need in order to be saved and grow spiritually, and
2. It gives all the authoritative truth (trusted) we need in order to make good judgments about what is right and wrong.

But the sufficiency of Scripture does not mean that God cannot speak through nature (Psalm 19:1) or that he cannot speak through the human conscience (Romans 2:15) or that he cannot speak through gifts of prophecy and wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8–10). It means that these are not sufficient to save us or nurture us or guide us. But the Scriptures are sufficient, in the sense that they give the only authoritative (trusted truth) rule for completing and assessing those other kinds of revelations.

Let's think about Thursday 6th April, traditionally known as Maundy Thursday. Where does that phrase come from? **The word Maundy comes from the Latin, 'man-datum', or 'command' which refers to the instructions Jesus gave His disciples at the Last Supper.** In many countries the day is known as Holy Thursday and is a public holiday.

Let's think about April 7th, known as Good Friday!

Let's think about April 9th, known as Resurrection Sunday!

APPLICATION

We have some great evangelistic opportunities this coming holidays through a Gospel Centred Multi-Generational time together, over 4 days!!