

“The First Short Term Mission Trip” // Acts 8:26–40 // SENT #11

Introduction:

Some of the most exciting experiences of my life have happened to me on the mission field... most humiliating

- Commenting on a lady’s attire: “you kiss good”
- I want to “sneeze” (fornicate)

Also seen the most incredible things...

The **title** of the message this weekend is, “The 1st Short-Term Mission Trip,” because, well, this is the first short term Christian mission trip ever taken...

- In it you are going to see a familiar theme: **God uses an ordinary Christian**—Phillip (we met him **last week**; he’s an **ordinary Christian**, not an **Apostle** or church leader: what we call a **‘layman’**), to bring the gospel to the first foreigner in the book of Acts.

And you’re going to see how the Spirit of God had been preparing Philip, and how he’d been preparing this foreigner, and then how he brings the two together.

Conviction: I believe that **God wants to use a lot of you in international missions to a much greater degree than he is**, and some of you have never considered that.

- Because you’ve thought of international missions as a special calling for “**special forces**” Christians (Christianity 401 or whatever).

But that’s not true. God wrote involvement in the Great Commission into his most basic call to follow him.

When God blessed **Abraham** and called him to follow, he told him in the same conversation he would use him to be a blessing to all nations on earth.

He told every follower of Jesus:

Follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19)....

The call to salvation and the commission into service for the Great Commission happen in the same moment

There is no gap between the call to follow Jesus and the call to engage in the Great Commission. God is like a **spiritual cyclone**, you see: he never pulls you in without almost instantaneously hurling you back out.

Did you know... The word “**missionary**” **never appears** in the Bible. We made that up. “Sent ones” does appear frequently in the Bible, though, and it applies to every disciple of Jesus:

- So we put the concept of sending into the **baptism declaration**. We ask every person who is baptized at the Summit Church 2 questions:
 - *Are you trusting in Christ alone as your salvation?”*
 - *“Are you willing to go wherever he sends you, and do whatever he asks you?”*
- We end every service with, “You are sent.”

The point: Involvement in missions is not something you do later, or that you graduate into. God put it in the original call to follow him.

Today we're going to give you a chance to take a first step, or for some, a 2nd or 3rd step, toward that.

- For many of you, it is simply to **start the process of going on a short term mission trip**. You've never been.
- For others, it is **more than that**. God is moving in you to **relocate your life** overseas, and I want you to commit to begin that process today. For all, it will be to **get involved praying** and supporting.

Acts 8:26–40

We left Philip in the middle of a revival in Samaria... Peter and John, the church leaders, had been called in to validate it... so now it's time for Philip to move on. *(And I just **can't get over that: God's cutting edge is laypeople; he brings in the Apostles for cleanup and support. Want to make your pastor happy? Call me in to validate what you've already done!**)*

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." Luke (the narrator of Acts) adds: (This is a desert (deserted) place.)

- Gaza was this little **nasty, out of the way** town. (Like one of those old redneck towns you go through on the way to Myrtle Beach that has 1 gas station, a Hardees, and a nail salon but, suddenly, without warning, for no reason at all, the speed limit changes to 25, and it's written on this little tiny sign, and there's 9 police cars hiding behind a billboard... and you can just tell it makes their day to write you that ticket. While they are writing you the ticket, you look around and you're like, "Who lives here? Why do you want me to slow down to look at your town?" Not that this has ever happened. Gaza was that kind of place.)
- And more than that, it was a **PHILISTINE city**. Gaza is a nasty, dirty little town filled with Philistines.

- The bottom line: It's **WAY out of the comfort zone of a Jew**. And very **inconvenient** to get there, at that. He had to walk 165 miles.
 - People sometimes complain about the inconvenience of traveling on a mission trip... "Oh, we had to fly 14 hours. Had a 3 hour layover." When you get to heaven Philip is going to be like "I had to walk 165 miles... so you shut up."

²⁷ And he rose and went.

And there (passing through Gaza) was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

- Today, Ethiopia, is a little small country. In that day, Ethiopia was basically **everything in Africa south of the Nile River**. Huge area.
- This guy was the treasurer of the entire region. This is a powerful dude.
- "Eunuch" means he'd been castrated (because if you were going to work in palace with the queen, they wanted to make sure you didn't get any frisky ideas, so they took care of that).
 - *(If you have any more questions about that, just ask your campus pastor, they'll be happy to explain that more in depth to you)*

He had come to Jerusalem to worship...

- For whatever reason this guy was curious about the God of the Jews... They had **lots of religions** in Ethiopia—they worshipped things like the sun, animals... and maybe this guy had the sense that there was **more to it** than that... maybe there was something inside of him that told him that the sun and animals were wonderful things, but **not the source of everything**.

This guy had gone to Jerusalem to learn about that God, ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot,

- (Now, I grew up in a church where they did flannel graph, so this guy is etched in my memory in this little semi-circle, half-turtle

shell looking thing, he's riding along and there's a guy beside him playing the ukulele. **FLANNEL GRAPH:** CHARIOT

- This was not that kind of chariot. The journey from Ethiopia to Jerusalem was over 1200 miles... and this guy is royalty; he is not riding for 1200 miles standing in a little semicircle turtle shell beside a guy playing a ukulele.
- Chariot here would have meant something more like a **big carriage**, hoisted onto the shoulders of 8 guys.)

...and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, **STOP: HOW did the Spirit say this to Philip?** It doesn't really tell us. But one of things you find in Acts is that the Holy Spirit speaks to people, moving them into mission... the Holy Spirit is mentioned 59 times in Acts, and in about 40 of those, he is speaking.

- "The Spirit said to Philip..."
- Acts 10:19, the Spirit said to Peter, "Go down and talk to these men, don't be afraid."
- Acts 13:2, 'The Holy Spirit said to the church... 'Separate for me Barnabas and Paul for ministry.'"¹

My question: Do you know and walk with the Holy Spirit this way? Are you aware of him speaking to you?

- Sometimes in Acts he speaks happens through a **word of prophecy through someone else** in the church. Sometimes it is a **divine vision**. Sometimes it seems to be just a **divine yearning** God puts into your heart.

My question is, "Are you **aware** of where the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? When is the **last time** you had a sense that he is sending to a

¹ 13:2, While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 10:19, And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 11:28, And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). 20:23, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

place, or calling you to something, or putting something into your heart to say to others? Are you **even listening?**"

I realize there are some different things about the book of Acts, but you can't convince me that the only book that records the church's experience of following the Spirit has nothing in common with ours.

The reason you are on mission is you're not listening to the Spirit. God never wanted us to do the Great Commission *for* him, but *with* him.

"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 (see, the chariot) and sit with him. (And you know who was **really ticked off** about that, don't you? The **4 guys** carrying the chariot on their shoulders. They had to be like, "you've got to be kidding me. This guy is taking in **hitchhikers** now?")

OK, so here's what you should see:

- In the midst of all that is going on in Samaria... big crowds, lots of people coming to Christ, God calls Philip to walk 165 miles down to a nasty little town called Gaza, because he's been preparing 1 guy...
 - You know this had to be confusing for Philip... God was using Philip there! "God what are you doing?"
 - I found out recently that Sam James, the guy who planted our church, was called by God to be a missionary in Vietnam. But after he was called, he had a son born with a heart defect that slowed down his appointment by 2 years. During that two years he planted this church. We're here because of an unexpected heart defect!²

² Possible: explain how the heart defect in Sam James' son caused him to stay and during that time he planted our church.

- What is happening to you may not be about you!

And here you've got this guy, the Ethiopian eunuch, whom God had been preparing, and now God brings to him Philip... and if I could just say this real quick: **This same thing has been happening to some of you this weekend.** Like the Ethiopian eunuch, he's been preparing you. Putting questions in your heart: questions about life, God; maybe you are looking at your kids; and then, almost randomly, he sent this Philip kind of person in your life to guide you. Maybe you are here with them this weekend! I want you to see that's not random. *God* is trying to get your attention!

- **Once I sat next to a lady on a plane...** I was on a flight to Taiwan. I introduced myself to her... She was going to Shanghai. I said, "Why?" Well, I know this is kind of weird, but I have a lot of questions... I'm trying to find myself. Trying to find God." I looked at her and thought, "Is this a joke?" So, I thought, "Sure, I'll play along," and I said, "Are you sure he lives in Shanghai?" She laughed and said, "No... but this is my 2nd trip. I'm so confused, while I was home visiting some relatives I heard this guy on the radio named David Jeremiah and he sounded like he knew God, and so I got his book, and now I'm halfway in it and I'm more confused than ever. I've been asking God, if he's there, to please find a way to explain himself to me." I thought: "*Are you making this up?... Well, ma'am, your prayers are answered.*")
- **Some of you Christians say, "Why does this stuff never happen to me?"** You never put yourself out there. **I'm not anyone special. Like Philip, I am just a guy with God's word who daily tells the Holy Spirit I'm available** to him to use. I dare you to pray that.

But, my bigger point in that is that God has been working in some of your lives, and that explains a lot of the things that have been happening to you (some of the questions, and the struggles), and it's even why you are here today.

³² Now the passage of the Scripture that the eunuch 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...*"

- This is a quotation from Isaiah 53, which was written almost about Jesus almost 800 years before his birth.
 - Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be like a **lamb led to the slaughter**; he would be **wrongfully accused** of crimes he did not commit, but would **not even open** his mouth.
- This all came true, of course, to the letter. When Jesus stood before Pilate he was accused of the most heinous crimes, and even though he hadn't done them, he sat there silent.
 - Why? Why didn't Jesus open his mouth and defend himself? Well, **when you are being accused in a court of law** and you make no response, what are you conceding? Guilt! Jesus was conceding guilt. **But not his own, as he had no guilt** (he was the one person to have lived a perfect life). **He stood silent because he was consenting to my guilt.**
 - He would be wounded for my transgressions... BEARING SHAME AND SCOFFING RUDE... Jesus was going to be beaten and punished for our sin.

³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"

- **Can I tell you one of the reasons he really wants to know?**
- There was a **sign** out front of the outer court of the Temple that said, "No lame, no blind, and no eunuchs may enter here."
- But in this same section of Scripture, from which the eunuch was reading, Isaiah said, "*Let the eunuch no longer say, 'Behold I am a dry tree, for thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who embrace my covenant: I will give you in my house a name better than sons and daughters, an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.'*" (Isaiah 56:4-6)

- Maybe he regretted his decision—had given up so much to work for the Queen. And now he find he has been cut off from God. *But now God is saying, “No longer let the eunuch say, ‘I am cut off from God...” Let not the **adulterer** say, or the prisoner... he has born my transgressions. **All we like sheep have gone astray...***
- *GUILTY, vile, and helpless we, spotless lamb of God was he...*

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.

- Salvation is **simple**. **Two things** you need to understand: Jesus in my place. He is Lord.
- The decision is simple. **Sitting down in a chair**.
- Then you **get baptized** to show it. Wedding ring.

³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, (By the way, “Came up out of the water.” They were both in the water. He didn’t get a cup and sprinkle him) the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and (the eunuch) went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus... (First of all, what happened to Philip? Can you believe this? Pre-Star Trek teleportation. That’s great for Philip; he doesn’t have to walk the 165 miles back to Jerusalem.) **FLANNEL GRAPH: PHILIP FLIES AWAY**

But also consider this: *This had a to be great platform from which to explain the gospel to the guys carrying the chariot.*

- **These guys like hadn’t heard the conversation in the chariot.** They’d just gotten the command to stop and watched the baptism and then SHAZZAM Philip is gone. And then the Ethiopian eunuch... and, by the way, they were 1100 miles away from

Ethiopia at this point... says, “Let me tell you some stuff I learned.”

- The **ancient historian Eusebius** says that this eunuch (and his band of servants) went on to plant the first church in Africa.
 - **Isn’t that great? Before there are even the first white, Western, European converts in Acts**, we have a thriving church meeting in the capital of Africa!
 - Every once in a while you hear someone say Christianity is a Western thing... but you can see that is not true... and **Africa, btw, is one of the two places where the church is growing the fastest today.**

The Point

God used an ordinary guy for his first international mission. God prepared Philip, and God prepared the Eunuch, and then he brought the two together.

- The fact that it is a layman, not an Apostle, that first carries the gospel internationally... **is that not an indication to us** by the Holy Spirit of how he will spread the gospel around the world?
- I have explained to you before that one of the most curious thing about Acts is how Luke goes out of his way to show you the gospel was spread around the world faster by layman than by Apostles.
- We saw it last week in Acts 8:1; now we see it in the first mission trip.
- And it doesn’t stop there: **When Paul finally arrives in Rome** to preach Christ there, he is greeted by hospitable “brothers,” who seem to have been there for quite some time (Acts 28:7).
- **Many of you have jobs** that naturally put you next to some of the most unreached people on the planet.
 - My dad in East Asia
- One of the challenges of international missions is how to support them all... IMB dilemma: stuck at 4500. And we need to give more. But what if there was a way to go from 4500 to 45000 with no additional money! And **IBM** will pick up the bill!

- And that's you, who already have jobs, learning how to make disciples as you go!
 - One of our **businessmen in our Cary campus** who, when his business sends him overseas, stops by to see our team in Kuala Lumpur.
 - Young man from our church, serving in a **law firm** in a Muslim country, working with one of our teams there. (Not his preference for a place to live, but the place where he can most be used)
 - **Remind of Sports Marketing guy**
 - We have men from our church using their **expertise in agriculture** to help us develop farming projects; teachers who work in schools over there or teach **missionary kids...**
 - Did you know that today, most of the countries in the world in **most need of a gospel presence** are also those in the **greatest need of business development**. Muslim world: 20% of population; yet produces only 4% of trade!
 - Businessman: *Maybe **God made you good at that skill so you could take it to places where he is not known**. What if **God put a key in your hand** for nations?*
- ***We want to equip you so that as God takes you, you can go.***

*We also want to **send you on mission trips—Philip didn't go specifically on business; he went because the Spirit of God sent him:***

- At the Summit we send a lot of trips to our day's version of Ethiopia...
 - Explain the 10/40 window... 6,645
 - Portfolio: Montreal, DR
- And there, we encounter guys like the Ethiopian eunuch. People God has prepared.
 - **Ishmael**
 - (Not always that way. Some are more servant-oriented: holding arms up! But on a couple of short-term trips I've been on, I've seen this.

- One our **teams to Serbia** last year was involved in leading a few people to Christ and there is a church meeting there now!

Not trying to make you feel guilty, just open your eyes:

- 1.46 billion have no access; 3.06 with little to no access
- If you lined them up 2 feet apart, they'd circle the globe 25x!
- Not a stat! girls caught in the sex slave trade; orphans who will never know a father
- China: 1 Christian for every 700K Chinese. To put in perspective: in a 5 mile radius of where I stand, there are 129 churches and Christian organizations. 1 church for every 450 people; 1 paid Christian worker for every 300! Is God that bad at math?
- **Positive:** when Paul died, there was 1 church for every 12 UPG's; now, 680 churches for every 1 UPG. We can do this!
- **But here's the problem:** 5% of the population lives in N America, yet 91% of paid Christian workers and 95% of every dollar given in Christ's name gets spent here.

Most of you have **never been** even on a short-term trip...

- Our goal is to **send 1000** people on short term trips this year
- We've got **trips to the nations** and trips to **places like NYC** where the nations have come to us
- We have trips for college students, families, even a father/son trip this summer. Really for everyone.
- We want you going to your neighborhood and your city, but also to the nations.
- **I want to ask you to make a bold step.** I want you to commit to the process of going on one. You may not have all your questions answered. But I want you to commit to begin the process and see where it does.
 - I'm going to ask you to do **something bold** in a minute. To **come forward:** A DEFINING moment.
 - It may take a year or two to plan, but asking you to commit to "be in."

For other of you, God is stirring you about something longer!

- **Maybe you've been on a short-term trip and now God is asking you for something more.**
- We have a vision to **plant 1000 churches by 2050** and to send out 5000 permanent capacity
- You know it might involve you! The Spirit of God has been saying it to you. I want you to come forward and say, "Yes." Or at least start the process and see where it leads.
 - When God first called me... **Railroad tracks...**
 - **"Here am I, send me!"** Many of you say, "Here am I: send someone else!"
 - Give God a **blank check**: dangerous. When you give it to a friend, you still want to know when they cash it. I realize that giving God a blank check is dangerous. He may cash it in Afghanistan. But you can trust Jesus... if you trusted him with your salvation, surely you can trust him you're your life.
- **College students**, special invitation for you: Come spend your summer with us. **CITY PROJECT/2nd city**. (our partners like Cru have good options, too).
 - Best decision of my life!
 - What about job? Internship. A promise I've built my life on: Matthew 6:33
 - Asking you to **come forward** as well...

Objections

- **"I'm not qualified"**: Well, you are exactly who should go. God will supply you! God doesn't call those he's equipped; he equips those whom he's called. Cart and horse.
- **"I'm not comfortable sharing my faith"**: we'll train you leading up to the trip. We notice the most remarkable transformation in people who go... they come back with a vision for the world and renewal to share their faith, sometimes for the first time!
 - Somehow seeing what God is doing around the world helps you better understand what you are supposed to be doing here. Sending you over *there* gives you better

perspective on what you are doing *here*. I don't know what God will let you experience over there, but I guarantee that once you put your foot on foreign soil you will never be the same.

- **"I can't take 2 weeks of vacation"**: We have weekend trips and 7-day trips. And if you have to use some your vacation... why not use some of it for the glory of God?
- **"There's so much need here."** God puts in each believer a desire for the nations that will only be fulfilled when you have discovered your part in working for the nations. Every believer should have this in their "portfolio" of missions.
- **"I don't have the money"**: We'll train you in raising support. We're experts at asking people for money. Great chance to watch God provide. Other people will donate.
 - GP: Worried: newly saved. no network. Got so much she shared with others on the team! 3rd trip to India.
- **"I don't have a passport."** We'll get you started.
- **"I hate foreign food."** We'll teach you how to say "no" in every language. *"Saya tidak akan makan yang..."* (I am not going to eat that). *"Kalau menghapus kepala, menghilangkan perut, mungkin saya makan."* These are phrases that saved my life in Indonesia.
- **At the end of the day, you go because it's not about you and your preferences, it's about him and his mission.**
 - **I realize that not every Christian, of course**, will be led to go long term, or perform their business in an unreached people group. But I want to challenge you to ask the question of yourself.
 - **MUSIC: Scott L**: here where I am irreplaceable

Doesn't the urgency of the gospel demand this of us?

Conclusion

- In just a moment, as we respond in worship, we're asking you to get out of your seat and come forward committing to GO now
- WALK THROUGH CARD

- *Going and we not know about it?*
 - **Commit to prayer:** just turn in
- Come, drop off your card, and stay down here for minute.
 - *If you are already committed to go, come forward to see
can pray over you!*
- Campus pastors will lead you IN PRAYER.

STAND AND COME!