

(Acts) Divine Appointments

by Brian Brodersen

God orchestrates divine appointments to bring people and circumstances together for His purposes, and we can expect these appointments throughout our lives if we are committed to Him.

Duration: 55:29

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22:1, Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:27, John 1:1, Acts 8:26

Topics: "Evangelism", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of providing all the necessary information to someone before leading them to the Lord. He shares a story about a friend who boasted about leading many people to the Lord but couldn't account for their whereabouts or spiritual growth. The speaker highlights that without the Lord, people are lost and empty, and nothing in the world can fill that void. He encourages believers not to feel pressured or scared about evangelism, but to trust in the Lord to set up divine appointments and guide the process. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God to open doors for evangelism opportunities.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles to the eighth chapter of Acts. We're picking up in verse 26 this evening of the eighth chapter of Acts. And just to refresh your memory, Philip was one of those seven men that was chosen to be a helper in the early church.

It seems that he was one of the first deacons. And we talked a bit about that in a previous study. He and Stephen out of that list of seven men that were chosen to help out in practical ways there in the church in Jerusalem.

They were then highlighted by Luke because of the ministries that they carried on apart from that practical help that they were giving to the church. Stephen, you remember, we read his story. He was a man of great power and God was performing miracles through him and people were coming to Christ.

But there were those who were against him as well, and they lied about him and they brought him before the court and they condemned him to death because he basically pointed once again to the fact that they were guilty of rejecting the Messiah. And so, again, Stephen became the first martyr. And then Luke went on to highlight the ministry of Philip.

And we saw how Philip, because there was a persecution that arose over the stoning of Stephen, the church was scattered and people began to go all over the place sharing the gospel. And as we saw, Philip went into Samaria and he began to preach Christ to the Samaritans and many, many people were coming to the Lord. Peter and John came down and prayed for them.

They received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and exciting things were happening in Samaria. Now, as we continue the story, Philip is the one that we're still looking at. And in the midst of this exciting time in Samaria, this time of awakening, this time of revival, this time when the spirit is being poured out, it says here in verse 26, and the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

So if you can put yourself in Philip's shoes, here he is. God's use him in a powerful way, and it just would indicate from the text that exciting things continue to happen. Nothing had slowed down, really, and they're right in the midst of this great work of God.

People are getting saved and people are getting baptized in the Holy Spirit and miracles are happening, and Philip is the catalyst for the whole thing. He's the guy that God used to get the whole thing started. And as all of this activity is happening, I'm sure that Philip was happy to be right where he was, and I'm sure he was thinking, Lord, this is a great place to be.

I hope I can stick around here for a while. But suddenly the Lord speaks and says, Philip, go down to the desert, go down to literally a deserted place. So I'm sure Philip must have been scratching his head, what go down to a deserted place.

But, Lord, this is the place where everything's happening. Lord, this is the place where they need me. He perhaps reasoned and, you know, I can identify with Philip a few years ago when I was living in London and pastoring there and we had just, you know, began to see the church really grow and things were exciting.

And we'd been there almost four years. And, you know, laboring from the time, you know, we first started with just a handful of people. We started that church with eight people.

And after, you know, almost four years, the Lord had blessed and a few hundred people were coming and we're just getting to that exciting point where, you know, I felt like, man, we can really start, you know, making an impact on London. And I was so thrilled about the prospects of the future and so excited about what the Lord was doing. And just, you know, seemingly out of the clear blue, the Lord spoke and said, go to the desert, go back to California, not a spiritual desert, but it is a desert.

You know, if you if you fly anywhere and you go to anywhere that's green, when you come back to California, what you notice is, man, this place is a desert. This place is just brown. And, you know, England is green.

You fly over as you're flying into England. One of the things you notice is just all the beautiful greenery. And I never really noticed the brownness or the desertness of California until I flew back and forth from England for a while.

But anyway, the Lord spoke and said, go back to California. And I really protested. What? Lord, you got to be kidding me.

It's just getting fun. It's just getting exciting. Lord, I need to stay here.

This is the place. This is where it's happening. And yet the Lord said, go, I've got I've got some plans for you.

And so, you know, we left and we came back and and here we are. But I can identify with Philip if he felt that way. I think he probably did.

But he's called to go down to the desert, and I'm sure at this point he probably had no idea at all what the Lord wanted to do. But here's the great thing to know. Whenever God calls you.

He's got something good in store. And, you know, we can testify to that as we've been back, and although, you know, many times my heart is still long to be where we were and to be involved in that work. God has certainly blessed us abundantly being here and he's doing good things.

And well, in some ways we get the best of both worlds. I'll be in London in a couple of weeks sharing with the church. So, you know, God is good.

And when he calls us, even though from the outward. Perspective, it might not seem like the right thing or Lord, are you sure this is what we want to be doing at this point or this is where we want to be going at this moment, you can be certain if the Lord is calling, that's the thing to do. That's the right thing.

And so, Philip, he did it. He arose and he went and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot. And there he read Isaiah, the prophet, so Philip takes this journey and it was quite a ways from Samaria down to the southern end of the country along the coastline there.

So it would have been a couple of days. And as he arrives at this deserted place, there's a road, of course, that went down to Egypt. He finds that he comes across a caravan.

With. It says an Ethiopian eunuch now back way, way, way back in history, a eunuch eunuchs were those who served the king in various capacities, and they were eunuchs literally for the protection of the king's harem. But as time went on, they sort of eliminated that aspect of it.

And yet they still retain the title of eunuch. So eunuch became sort of an official title. And this man was a prominent man in the kingdom of Ethiopia under Candace, the queen.

Now, just for your information, Candace wasn't actually the name of the queen, but Candace was the title of the queen of Ethiopia, much like Pharaoh was the title of the king of Egypt. And so he was the treasurer, basically, under Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. The Ethiopia of the ancient world was not exactly the Ethiopia of today.

The Ethiopia of the ancient world compassed more of what we know today as the Sudan. And so that was the particular region that he was from. Now, evidently, he was a proselyte to Judaism or he perhaps was what they would call a God fearer.

Now, you see, there were Gentiles, non-Jews who would convert to Judaism. Of course, the vast majority of non-Jews were idolaters, and yet living in the midst of idolatrous religious systems, they would, of course, sense the emptiness and the frustration of and the futility of all of that. And oftentimes when they

would come into contact with the Jewish community community, they would be greatly impressed by this whole idea of one God.

And of course, within the Jewish religion, there was a high moral standard that would have been in contrast to the low moral standards of the idolatrous religious systems. And so many times Gentiles would be attracted to Judaism and they would convert to Judaism. They would actually be circumcised and they would go through a ritual washing and they would become what's called a proselyte.

They were a convert to Judaism. Now, there was another group of people that didn't quite go that far. They didn't go through the ceremonial aspect.

They didn't go through the circumcision or through the ritual washing, but they in their heart, they embraced the God of Israel and they were known among the Jews as the God fearers. And so this man was one or the other. We don't know if he was actually a convert, a proselyte or a God fear, but he had somehow had connections with Jews, and that led him at a certain point to take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

And so he had been there and he had been there in the temple, and now he's heading back to his home on his way back. He's reading from the scroll of Isaiah. Now, this indicates that this was a serious guy.

He was serious about seeking God. It wasn't easy to obtain a piece of the Bible in those days. It wasn't.

It wasn't inexpensive either, actually, it would cost quite a bit. So but obviously, he's a man in power and position, and so he probably had some money and he had purchased, evidently, the scroll of Isaiah. And there with his entourage, with his caravan, he's heading back toward Ethiopia and he's got out the scroll and he's reading it as he goes.

Now, Philip, this is what he finds when he gets down to the desert. Right when he arrives at the destination that God had sent him to, he finds that this man is passing by in his chariot and he's reading from Isaiah. Now, Philip knew he was reading from Isaiah because in those days, quite often they would read out loud.

And so he was just rolling along, reading out loud from the scroll of Isaiah. Then the spirit said unto Philip, verse 29, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Isaiah.

So, you know, you can imagine Philip is, you know, he's jogging along, you know, and he comes up alongside of the chariot and he hears the guy reading and he cries out to him. He says, do you understand what you're reading? And the man responds and he says, how can I accept some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. This is what you might call a classic illustration of a divine appointment.

And that's what we want to talk about. Here this evening, divine appointments. These supernatural connections, God sets it all up in advance and we, his people, as we're going through our day to day routine, as we're just taking care of business and just making our way through life, all of a sudden we stumble upon these divine appointments.

That's why it's so important to respond to things that the Lord tells us to do. You see, it might look like not the best thing. Oh, Lord, come on.

What do you mean? Leave this great outpouring and this revival and this fresh work of your spirit and go to the desert. But yet, you see, in the desert, God had something and there was a divine appointment waiting for Philip, just like for us, we will find that there are divine appointments as we go through our life. We will find that God will bring us into contact with people and not just into contact with people, but he'll bring us into contact with people that we are really going to connect with, perhaps because of the circumstances in our own life, perhaps because of our background or where we've been or something like that.

But the Lord works in an interesting way to prepare a person to meet him and at the same time to prepare the vessel through which that person will be introduced to him. And then at that given moment, God just brings the whole thing together. And, you know, I believe that if we are committed to the Lord, if we're seeking him, we can expect divine appointments right all the way through our lives just as we go.

You know, we can't necessarily predict when they're going to come, but just know that they are going to come and you will find yourself in circumstances and involved in situations where you'll suddenly realize, man, the Lord set this thing up. This is incredible. You know, my daughter is attending college right now and she's doing like a beauty school sort of a thing.

And so she comes from her first couple of days of school and she starts telling us about all the girls that are in her class and, you know, all their backgrounds because they have to share all this stuff with each other, you know. And and so, you know, she starts telling us about, you know, this one and her background and this other one who, you know, it says she's a Christian and this one who's, you know, not a Christian and into some, you know, sort of a cultic kind of stuff and just an interesting group of people. And as she's telling us about this, you know, my wife and I, Cheryl, we're just looking at the whole thing thinking, you know, the Lord's got her in this.

He's got her here at this school, at this time for a particular reason, not, you know, not just to do what she's doing. And sure enough now, as the weeks are going by and the relationships are developing and and opportunities are coming, it's really interesting how the Lord is opening doors for her to minister. Not, you know, she's not the pushy type.

She's not, you know, out there just saying, hey, listen, you know, I'm beside this beauty school thing. I'm a Christian. I'm an evangelist.

Let me tell you about the Lord or, you know, she's not that kind of person. But, you know, just as she's walking with the Lord, she loves the Lord. She's seeking the Lord.

The Lord's just opening up these opportunities. And there's one particular gal that she's working with who brings her tarot cards to work all the time. And, you know, right away, Kristen says, OK, you know, she passes them out to everybody.

And, well, this is sort of a good luck thing, you know, take this. And, you know, because it's like, you know, no, I don't think I'll take that, you know. But anyway, as things go on, you know, a little relationship is starting to develop.

And lo and behold, as she's talking to this gal, she finds out that at one time this girl used to go to Calvary Chapel years and years ago when she was a kid. She had come here and she remembered the concerts and all of this sort of thing. And then, you know, one thing leads to another and then she's out and then the girls are asking her to pray.

And then she prayed. And, you know, as we look at this thing, you just see this is a divine appointment. God has prearranged this whole situation there.

And I'm sure you have those kinds of things that you can relate to as well. And what I want to encourage all of us in tonight is to be people who are open to and anticipating the divine appointment, just looking for those times when the Lord will bring someone and all of the pieces of the puzzle will fit and you'll just stand there marveling, thinking, Lord, there's no way that we could have planned this. This couldn't have been set up by man.

It's a divine appointment. That's what Philip was having here. And we'll talk more about that in a minute.

But let's go on with the story. So the man says to Philip in his response, when he asked him, do you understand what you read? He said, how can I accept some man guide me? You know, a lot of people feel that way. A lot of people will read through their Bibles.

And they'll, you know, sort of be puzzled or baffled as they're reading through it, and then perhaps they come to church and the very passage they were reading and puzzled about and didn't seem to get anything out, you know, the pastor will get up and expound it and it'll just open up to them and they'll come up and say, you know, I read that same passage. I didn't get any of that out of that. And, you know, what's happening there is we see.

The necessity of the gifts of the spirit in the church, and we see the necessity of the gift of teaching. Teaching is a gift, not everybody is gifted to teach, but God, thank God he gives us gifted men. He gave some to be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastor teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.

So the body of Christ can be built up. But there is that necessity of teachers. Now, some people, they, you know, get a bad taste in their mouth about the church or about church leaders or whatever.

And they say, I'm never going to church again. I don't need to go to church anyway. I don't need that guy to tell me anything.

I've got my Bible. I'll just sit at home and read it myself. Well, you can do that.

And certainly God's going to speak to you. But remember that God has appointed pastors and teachers and evangelists and apostles and prophets. God has appointed them so the church can be built up.

So we do need to be taught. We do need those gifted men sometimes to open up the scriptures to us and to give us an understanding that we wouldn't necessarily come to on our own. So verse 32 tells us that the place of scripture which he read was this.

Now, here's where we see another aspect of this whole divine appointment. I mean, this guy's got a copy of the scriptures, perhaps just the scroll of Isaiah. Perhaps he's got the entire the entirety of scripture at that point.

Of course, the entire Old Testament was available at that point. Even if he just had the scroll of Isaiah in our Bible, there's 66 chapters in Isaiah of all the places he could have been reading in Isaiah, listen to where he read the place of scripture, which he read was this. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lambdom before his shears.

So opened he not his mouth in his humiliation, his judgment was taken away. And who shall declare his generation for his life is taken from the earth. He's reading from Isaiah 53 of all places.

The clearest. Chapter in all of the Bible. Concerning the suffering of Christ vicariously for the sin of the world, the clearest chapter in all the Bible.

So you see, God has set this thing up. He just happens to be reading Isaiah 53. He just happens to be on this particular road.

And Philip just happens to be there as well. It didn't just happen to be God set it up, God ordained it, you know, it's like back in the book of Ruth. They're the story of Ruth where.

God was wanting to restore and bless this woman, Naomi, and. Of course, she was the her family was a family through which David would come and then, of course, Jesus would come through David and Ruth, her daughter in law, whose husband had died, a very beautiful woman. It says that she went out to glean in the fields of Boaz.

And interestingly, it says she just so happened to do that, just sort of, you know, accidentally ended up in the field of Boaz. Boaz was a family member who was a wealthy, prosperous man who could carry on the family line and who did indeed do that in the future and became, again, one of the ancestors of David. But the interesting thing is it says she just happened to wander into his field.

But you see, it wasn't just a coincidence, but that's the providence of God. God led her sovereignly, providentially into the field of Boaz because he was the guy that could actually redeem the family. He would become the kinsman redeemer.

And yet it's interesting how, you know, the implication is that, oh, it just sort of, you know, happened. But really, it happened because God was guiding and leading. He was overruling providentially, just like he's doing right here.

And this man happens to be reading Isaiah 53. And so the eunuch answered Philip and he said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this of himself or of some other man. So evidently, he had been to Jerusalem, he had gone to the temple, but for whatever reason, he had not yet heard the gospel.

Now, remember, some time has passed and the gospel was spreading greatly throughout Jerusalem, but also this was a time of persecution, as you remember. So perhaps things were a bit subdued while he was there. But evidently, as of yet, he hasn't heard anything about Jesus.

But he's curious. He wonders, who is he talking about? Is he talking about himself? Is he talking about someone else? When you read Isaiah 53, it is very clear who he's talking about. The great tragedy today is that the Jewish people do not know who the prophet is talking about.

There's a blindness when it comes to their understanding of this. As a matter of fact, in the synagogue, they do a yearly reading of the scriptures. And in other words, every Sabbath day, they read a portion of scripture that will take them ultimately through the entire text.

And I think it's a year, it might be a couple of years. They omit Isaiah 53. They read everything else in the scriptures, but they omit Isaiah 53.

And the reason they omit it is because the rabbis are afraid of it. They're afraid that if the average Jew reads Isaiah 53, they're going to draw the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah. And that, of course, is the obvious conclusion.

We were in Israel a few years ago and we were witnessing to one of our guides and we were sharing with him about the Lord and he was, you know, these guides are really, you know, they're they're smart. They know their history, they know their geography and they know their religion a little bit. And so, you know, this guy was talking a lot about Jesus and everything, and it almost sounded like he was a believer.

And finally, we got it out of him that, oh, no, he didn't believe that. It's just part of his job, you know, to know this stuff. And so we started talking to him and pressing him a little bit more about the Lord, about Jesus and his claims and, you know, all of that sort of thing.

And he was sort of arguing with us back and forth a little bit. But, you know, he was indicating that he was perhaps open to hearing a little more. So so I said to him, well, let me read you a passage and I didn't tell him where I was reading from.

So I opened up and I read Isaiah 53. And he said, oh, well, of course, that's Jesus. There's no anybody knows that you're reading about Jesus.

Of course, it's obvious. And his assumption was that I was reading from one of the Gospels. And I said, you're right, I am reading about Jesus.

And guess who wrote this? And well, one of those, you know, Matthew or I said, no, actually, it was your prophet Isaiah. He just about fell over. He couldn't believe it.

What what Isaiah are that's in my Bible, he didn't know he had never read it. And that's the tragic thing that so many Jews, they don't even know what Isaiah 53 says. They've never read it.

They've never had the opportunity because of the paranoia of the rabbis that they're going to lose people. Actually, when a Jew reads Isaiah 53. And is moved by it and then goes to the rabbi, which they often do to get his take on it, the rabbi will say, oh, no, that's not speaking about Jesus.

Don't let the Christians fool you. That's speaking about Israel. That's speaking about us, the Jewish people.

After all, we've suffered. We've been persecuted. We've gone through trial after trial.

And he'll talk about, you know, the various persecutions and the inquisitions and the pogroms and the Holocaust. And and he says Isaiah 53 is clearly about us, the suffering servant of God, Israel. But yet, if you read the text itself plainly, it does not speak of Israel.

It speaks of the servant of the Lord who dies on behalf of Israel. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before shears is done. So he opened his mouth.

He was wounded for our transgressions, Isaiah says, as a Jew, he was bruised for our iniquities, Isaiah says, as a Jew, as he goes further, when thou shall make his soul an offering for our sin. So here he is, he's reading Isaiah 53, and he's wondering, who is the prophet talking about? And Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and he preached unto him, Jesus. That was easy to do, preached unto him, Jesus, right from there.

You know, I would love to be able to open up at any scripture and preach Jesus to people. And the more you saturate yourself in the scripture, the more likely you'll be able to do that. There was a great preacher in Britain back in the 1900s.

His name was excuse me, the 1800s. His name was Charles Spurgeon. Some of you are familiar with him.

Some of you have heard him quoted several times. Some of you have never heard of him until just this moment. But he was they called the prince of preachers and he was a phenomenal preacher.

He preached. I have his I have his sermons at home, 66 volumes of sermons. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of sermons, he preached every verse of the Bible, but he didn't do it in a consecutive sense like we do it here.

He didn't start in Genesis and go to Revelation. He would just take verses of the Bible and he would preach sermons around those verses. I'll tell you, this guy preached Jesus from every verse imaginable.

You know, sometimes I'll look at the text and I'll read I'll read the verse that he's going to preach from. And, you know, the first has absolutely nothing to do with anything relating to Jesus, but it's amazing how he can preach Jesus from it. It just it absolutely fascinates me, but it also provokes me as I look at that, I think, Lord, because you said the volume of the book is written of you.

You said that the whole thing was about you to be able to preach Jesus from any portion of scripture. What a glorious goal to have. Well, Philip had a fairly easy task before him because he was right there at the text that spoke so clearly of Jesus.

And so he preached unto him, Jesus. But let me say this also, this is something that we all need to be reminded of, especially those who teach and preach that we are to preach Jesus. We're not to preach other things.

It's so easy to get caught up preaching other things. And lots of people preaching today are preaching lots of other things. There are those that emphasize, you know, sort of the how to kind of theme.

And every message is on how to do some practical thing a little bit better or something like that, you know. And that's that's not really what we're called to do. Sometimes people get real caught up in issues, their preaching is real issue oriented.

They're always talking about, you know, the issues of the day. And that's something that we need to guard ourselves against. And even on a personal level, when we are sharing the gospel with people, we need to be careful not to get caught up with issues.

And sometimes people really get caught up in politics and they end up preaching politics or a political position. And sometimes even on a personal level, we can get wrapped up in the political thing or we can get, you know, real involved in preaching traditional values, you know, versus the the no value system really that's prevalent today. And all of those things, although they have interest and although, you know, they play a role in life and society and everything else for us as Christians, that's not really the issue.

And it's important that we preach Christ. You see, I can get all caught up in issues with people and I can actually even change somebody's mind on a particular issue, perhaps. Let's just take, for example, the

issue of abortion.

It's a serious issue. And it is an issue that needs to be addressed, but I could conceivably convert a person from a pro-choice to a pro-life position. But still.

Leave them in their trespasses and sins, and although they've changed their view on an issue, they're still lost, they're still perishing. You see, here's the great thing. When you preach Jesus to people, when people accept Jesus, he changes their heart and then their mind changes about all the issues, too.

And so we have to really make sure we're preaching Jesus. We're communicating him and in our circumstances here today, you know, in our nation. It's so easy to get caught up debating and arguing and, you know, contending over all of the issues.

And we've got to be careful not to lose focus of the main thing that we preach Jesus to people. You know, you meet somebody who's caught up in the whole gay lifestyle or something, and you want to just tell them how wrong that is and why that's wrong and all of that. And it is wrong.

But preach Jesus to them, because when they accept Jesus, he'll tell them it's wrong. They'll receive it from him a lot better than they do from us, and he'll transform them from the inside out as well. So Philip did the wise thing, he preached Jesus, and as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water and the eunuch said, see, here is water.

What does hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. And so, man, this guy, the Lord just touched his heart.

And as they come to a watery area, he's ready to get baptized. But notice what Philip asked him. He said, in effect, do you believe with all your heart? Maybe Philip asked him that question because of his experience with Simon back in Samaria, you remember Simon saw the miracles that Philip was doing and he said, I want to be part of this and he was baptized like everybody else.

But when Peter and John came down, it was made evident that Simon hadn't really believed with his heart. Remember, Peter said your heart is not right in the sight of God, and maybe Philip now is reflecting on that previous experience with Simon and he's just saying, look, you know, I want to make sure. And that's a lesson that all of us, I think, learn, you know, sometimes in our excitement about maybe leading someone to the Lord or our anxiousness to say a prayer with them, we don't really give them all the information that they need to have to make that true decision.

I had a friend years ago who kind of prided himself in how many people he led to the Lord, and he would occasionally just, you know, kind of. Say, you know, I led four people of the Lord today. And, you know, one time after, you know, I'd known him for quite a while, he just shot out a number, you know, I've led 40 people in the last couple of years or whatever.

And, you know, I looked at him, I said, where are those people? I've never met any of them, you know, and he was a person in the fellowship. And so I thought, you know, if you're leading all these people to the Lord right here in the community, why aren't any of them coming to the church? And the whole thing was he was just so anxious to get him to say the prayer. That, you know, he'd pretty much tell him anything they wanted to hear just to get that prayer out of him, because in his immature thinking, that was what you were supposed to do.

But that's not it. We want to make sure that people know that people really believe with all their heart, that people understand what they're getting into, because that's when real conversion takes place. And Philip, I think, learned that lesson.

So he says to him, if you believe with all your heart and that's. What it's all about, it's not just. I'll take Jesus right now because I'm in a jam and well, you said he helps people, so I need help here.

Give me Jesus. How many thousands of people are there wandering around Orange County who have done that? They've taken Jesus, they've accepted the Lord. But yet they're.

They're no more Christian than the devil. Perhaps someone was too hasty, perhaps someone was too anxious to get that notch on their belt or whatever, and so we've got to be careful when we're sharing with people. Many times I'll be sharing with someone and, you know, I'll feel impressed by the Lord to to ask them if they want to receive Christ.

But I'll also say to them, you know what, if you're not sure, then don't do this. I'm not trying to force into anything, I'll say, because if I can force you into it, you can be forced out of it. If I can talk into it, you'll be talked out of it.

It's a decision you've got to make. But if you want to make the decision, I want to help you do that. But there's a real danger in, you know, sort of pressing the issue and then, you know, OK, they you know, they finally just in exasperation, they just give up and say, OK, I'll pray it.

And then they pray the prayer and then you're like, oh, you're saved. That's great. OK, I'll pick you up for church tomorrow night.

What? Pick me up for church. What for? And then, you know, you're calling them, hey, you're going to come to fellowship and well, you know, I can't tonight. And oh, you know, and you're saying, oh, they're saved, but they just know they're not saved.

That's the problem, you see, because when you're saved. The spirit of God comes into your life, all of a sudden the things of God are of interest to you. Nobody has to drag you to church by putting a bit in your mouth.

You want to go. You want to be part. You want to connect.

And that happens when a person believes with their whole heart. And Philip understood that now. So he said to him, if you believe with all your heart, you may.

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. And he commanded a chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.

And he baptized him. You know, think about this man for a moment. He was an important man.

He was a man of position. He was a man of great power in a great kingdom of the day. But obviously, all of those things had not been able to satisfy the deepest longings of his heart.

And, you know, he's really typical of. Man in general. You know, if a person's estate in life is what you might call, you know, sort of a low estate, he's not wealthy, he's not known, he's not necessarily successful or whatever the case.

Well, he lives with this thought that if I could just rise above this place that I'm at and live upon this level. Of society, then I would be fulfilled, then I would be happy, then my problems would be gone, then this frustration and this depression and all this would clear up. You know what the people living up here are thinking, you know, if I could just get back down to here.

You know, maybe get back to the simple things of life, everything's become so complicated, I'm so frustrated and confused and depressed, I just want to get back to that. If I could just get back there, all this stuff would clear up. Which obviously means that neither place brings what people are looking for.

You see, because what people really need is a relationship with God and none of those other things can. Take the place of that.

None of those things can satisfy the human soul was created for communion with God, and until a person comes into a relationship with God, there's nothing in the world that can satisfy. Remember that. Remember that.

With the people that you perhaps know who are in those higher positions in life, perhaps remember that they have the same struggles, the same frustrations, the same. Emptiness, you know, sometimes we're a bit intimidated by people of stature and we think, oh, well, I probably, you know, I probably wouldn't talk to that person. What can I say to them or how could I, you know, look at their look, who they are, what they've attained and who am I? But just know this, that everybody's really ultimately on the same level.

Because if you don't have the Lord, you're lost. And you're empty and that's reality and nothing in the world will fill it. And here's this guy with all of that, but yet.

There wasn't that. Fulfillment in his life, even religion had still left him with a longing, but now he meets Christ. And although we don't know anything else about him, church tradition says he went back to Ethiopia and began to evangelize.

And perhaps he did because there was a community of believers that developed in that part of the world. And maybe it was through his influence. We don't know.

But we do know this. That the Lord met his need that day, and so when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away, Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing.

So he went to Jerusalem in search probably of peace, in search of fulfillment, perhaps in search of answers and really, you know, wanting to connect with the God of Israel. But he left Jerusalem disappointed. But now he meets Philip, this one guy just on the desert road and his life is transformed and he goes his way rejoicing, you know, it's not found in, you know, joining a religion or, you know, going to the biggest, best church around, man, it's just in a simple relationship with the Lord.

And oftentimes the Lord just uses the most simple, humble people to connect other people with Christ like he did Philip here. And so Philip was caught away. And it seems that he was miraculously caught away.

I think that he was. He just suddenly vanished and the Lord landed him at Azotus, but Philip was found at Azotus and passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea. So the Lord just miraculously took him.

And that, of course, would have been, you know, a bit of an added bit of confirmation to the Ethiopian. He's just baptized. There they are in the water and he's rejoicing.

And Philip just disappears all of a sudden. And he finds the Lord transports him somehow miraculously to Azotus, which would be along the coast in the south, and then he just continues to make his way up to Caesarea, sharing the gospel as he goes. And so that brings us to the end of Luke's discussion about these two men, Stephen, who was the first martyr and now Philip.

Philip, interestingly, turns up one other time in the book of Acts. Several years later, the apostle Paul will visit the house of Philip, the evangelist, one of the seven who has four virgin daughters who prophesy. That's this guy right here.

And he's specifically declared to be Philip, the evangelist. He was an evangelist. And as we looked at his story here, notice there were two types of evangelism that he was involved in.

He was involved in what you might call mass evangelism. As he was reaching out to that whole city of Samaria, and then he's involved in personal evangelism with this one guy. And, you know, God gives us in different ways.

Some people are really gifted in the area of mass evangelism. And generally, I would say to when a person is gifted in mass evangelism, they're they're probably gifted as well in in personal evangelism, but it's not necessarily work the other way. There is a place for mass evangelism, there is a need for mass evangelism.

Thank God for the opportunities that we have for mass evangelism, you know, where large groups of people gather together to hear the gospel, the Harvest Crusades, a prime example, of course, and those kind of events that are geared toward reaching out to nonbelievers in large groups and giving a message that they can respond to and receive Christ. That's very important, very important aspect of church life, but just as important is personal evangelism. Now, when it comes to personal evangelism, the person who is an evangelist in the personal sense might not be able to, you know, go over into the mass evangelism realm.

In other words, they might not be a great speaker. They might not be able to put, you know, thoughts together in such a way and communicate them in such a way that people can really connect with that. But on a personal level.

They connect with people and they through their love and their patience and they're just, you know, continuing to share Christ as the opportunities come, they lead people to the Lord. Personal evangelism is a great thing. It's a wonderful thing.

And really, mass evangelism can't even work without personal evangelism because people need to get where get to where the evangelist is. And that usually happens by individuals saying, hey, I've been telling you about Jesus. Come and listen to this guy and he'll make it a little more clear to you.

But Philip was involved in both. Some people are involved in both, but I think most of the time it's sort of one of the other. Not everyone is gifted as an evangelist.

But I do believe that every one of us are to seek to be used by the Lord in that way. And I also believe that if we ask the Lord for those divine appointments, he's going to give them to us. And that's what I want to

encourage you in tonight.

Divine appointments. Ask the Lord to give you divine appointments, just begin to to ask him in prayer and then watch and see what happens. It might be on the job.

It might be when you're just out and about doing whatever you're doing, it might be when you go in to get your Starbucks coffee. It might be with your neighbors, you never know, you never know, I have had so many great divine appointments, taxi cabs, you know, when you're traveling, sometimes if you're flying around, things like that, you know, the Lord plops you down next to somebody. And sure enough, as you sit there and you begin to talk and get to know each other, the doors begin to open and pretty soon you realize, man, this is a great opportunity.

It's a divine appointment. God set this whole thing up. And I believe that if we'll ask for those in sincerity, God will bring them along.

God will bring them along, because I believe that even though we might not be gifted evangelists like Philip was, like Paul said to Timothy, he said, do the work of an evangelist. We're all. Potentially evangelist, as we just say, Lord, just use me, just use me in some way.

But, you know, I think it really starts with just our lives themselves, just that we're loving, that we're patient with people, that we're different, that people see that about us. And that sometimes leads to inquiry. They want to know, well, why are you like this and how come you don't do that? And then you say, well, I'm a Christian.

And then they say, well, what's that? And then there you go and you share with them. You know, sometimes when we think about evangelism, we it becomes like this big, heavy thing, it's like, oh, no, I got to evangelize. I'm so scared.

I hate to talk to people, you know, and then you feel this big pressure. Don't feel that pressure, because that's not the Lord putting that on you. The Lord sets things up and it just flows, it just runs so beautifully, so smoothly, it's just this.

It's this great thing. And it just happens as we walk in the spirit and as we ask him. And so as we close tonight.

Let's pray for each other that God will. Open up doors and that he will send. Divine appointments our way.

Let's pray, Father, we thank you for the story of Philip. And Lord, how exciting to read this story and to think of this, this man in this chariot reading Isaiah and you sending Philip right alongside him, Lord, knowing when he was going to be there and what was going to be on his heart. And Lord, we believe tonight that there are many people all around us like this Ethiopian eunuch.

Lord, who are wondering about things, who maybe have even been reading the scriptures a little bit, and they're wondering, what is this talking about? And Lord, right here tonight, we want to. Commit ourselves to being used by you and Lord, we ask tonight in Jesus name that you would set up divine appointments for us. Lord, would you do that? Would you just pave the way and Lord, you know, some in the room are bold and courageous when it comes to sharing their faith.

Some are maybe not as bold and some are just downright scared to do it. Fill us with your spirit, Lord and Lord, pave the way before us and bring about those opportunities, Lord, that we might be like Philip in our community, reaching out to people that we work with or go to school with or people that we live near or people that we see frequently as we go to shops and different things that we do. Whatever we do, if we're on the golf course or out surfing or involved in some sports or whatever, Lord, may people know that we are your disciples.

And like Philip, Lord, may we speak to others about you, prepare their hearts and connect us with those that you've prepared. Give us, we pray in Jesus name, Lord, divine appointments for your glory. Amen.

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