

Mission Possible

The Church Gathered and Scattered

Acts 8:26-40 ESV

As the Church of Jesus Christ, this is our time to shine. Over the years, we have abdicated the public square - we capitulated and stepped back - our voice was relegated to the church building instead of the town hall, city hall, and school board. Being part of the world culture, we now need to engage it with passion, faith, Truth, justice, and God's Word. We need to bring that to the center of things where it all started.

There are some people here who God is calling and stirring in their heart to serve in civil government at the local level and in the public square. Instead of saying, "*Somebody should do something,*" we need to know that "if it's to be, it begins with me." Maybe we've made comments because we've seen the depravity, and the lack of righteousness, justice, and Truth. Perhaps the Lord is pricking *our* heart - stirring *our* spirit and saying, "*You're the one!*"

If we've ever prayed, "*Here I am, Lord. Send me,*" then we need to listen when he *calls* us - not to negotiate with God - but to say, "Yes." Our freedom and breakthrough will come on the other side of our "yes" to God - to what he's calling us to do in the public square. Who will say, "*Yes! Here I am, Lord. I'll do it. Send me.*"

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 ESV

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place."

"We must recognize that God has given us time, and now we must go and advance the Kingdom of God." - Tim Barton

We don't have a *political* problem - at the end of the day here in America, we have a spiritual problem. These political issues are not going to be solved by us being more *political*, but rather as we get our hearts right with God. We're to be *immersed* in the Holy Spirit, where he comes *upon* us and we are empowered to do something that we couldn't do before.

The Holy Spirit isn't weird, so we don't need to be confused or nervous. He is a Gentleman and we don't need to be afraid. All he does is *empower* us to do what God has *called* us to do. He gives us the equipment we need to fulfill our mission. He gives us his very *presence* - bathing us in, and immersing us *into* the Holy Spirit, so we have what we need when it's needed. That's not weird - it's *awesome and amazing!*

Acts 1:8 ESV

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 8:14-17 ESV - The Baptism or Filling of the Holy Spirit

"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on [upon] any of them, but they had only been baptized [immersed] in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

The Church gathered and scattered

Acts 8:26-28 ESV - Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip [the evangelist], 'Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah."

The Holy Spirit empowers us to evangelize (witness). We may say something, but the Holy Spirit takes our words exactly where they need to go. When we step into an opportunity to share our faith, we don't have to know *everything*. All we need to know is our own story. We don't need to be afraid - our experience trumps every intellectual argument, so we need to tell our story. If we've been baptized in the Holy Spirit, he takes us and guides us into it. God can redeem and anoint our conversation even when we think we've completely blown it.

Our story is who we used to be and what God did in our life. Even though we're not perfect, we're not who we *used* to be. We are works of art *in-progress*. God is *working* on us - shaping and molding us. *That's* our story. We don't need to have it all figured out and also know the entire "Roman Road". We just tell our story and allow the Holy Spirit to take it. We bring the *input*, but God himself gives the *output*. He will validate our words and our story.

1] The Order - the Holy Spirit speaks

Acts 8:29 ESV

"And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.' "

God taps us on the shoulder when we're standing in line waiting to check out or when we're in an office meeting and he says, *"Hey, it's time to say something."* When we're out and about - "as we go," we are to disciple nations, declare Truth, and tell our story.

2] The Approach - A conversation is started

Acts 8:30 ESV

"So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'"

We begin to engage someone by asking a question, *not* with both guns blazing. The power of our story is not in us doing a monologue or preaching, but by stepping into a space anointed by the Holy Spirit with questions about *them*, having a conversation and building a *relationship*. Sharing our faith is not about memorizing a sermon to preach just to fulfill "our duty" and then walk away. Instead, we're to be a person who *happens* to be born again and filled with the Holy Spirit.

3] The Invitation - Don't go where you're not invited

Acts 8:31-33 ESV

"And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he 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. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' "

The right thing at the wrong time is still the *wrong thing*. We shouldn't step into somebody's space uninvited when the Holy Spirit hasn't prepared the way. If we do, we're on our own. If we pause long enough to listen to the Holy Spirit, he will point us and lead us into a conversation, and we'll know it's him in the moment - that it's a *God-moment*. We *share*, and we know that he'll use it, and we can't mess it up.

We don't have to be clever or fancy with our words - we can just be real, honest, and authentic. *"Hey, this is who I was, this is what happened when God came into my life, and this is who I am now. I haven't arrived, but I'm getting there. I'm not perfect, but I'm being perfected in a process."* When we do that, God will take our words and *land* them - *that's* the invitation.

4] The Conversation - More questions needing answers

Acts 8:34 ESV

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

When we're in a conversation, questions *happen*. When we're authentic and real, and not being preachy or religious, but just being *us*, and we're filled with the Holy Spirit, questions come. A witness on the stand in court just answers the questions - that's *it*.

5] The Presentation - Tell the story, share the Good News

Acts 8:35 ESV

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus."

All Philip did was share his faith. *"Let me tell you the Good News. It will change your life!"* We should be able to share our story in two minutes. We need to perfect our "elevator pitch" - our *two-minute miracle*. It only takes two minutes to say, *"Let me tell you who I used to be and what God did, and let me tell you about the adventure I've been on since. I don't have it all figured out yet. Sometimes things get hard and sometimes stuff happens, but here's the deal - I now have the grace on my life to handle them when bad things happen, and I don't respond the way I used to."* Peace in the midst of the storm - joy in chaos - we have all that in us.

6] The Commitment... The invitation to believe

Acts 8:36 ESV

"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?'"

Acts 8:37 LSB

"And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"

We don't need to talk people into receiving Christ or to cajole them into getting baptized and coming to church. If we have to beg people to do any of these things, the Holy Spirit may not be working here. Sometimes we need to take a clue and just walk away and wait for God's timing.

7] The Response - Receive Christ, then be baptized

Acts 8:38-40 ESV

"And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea."

We don't need to feel guilty if we don't shame somebody into Jesus. This is so natural it should be like breathing. Our buckets should be so filled that as we go out, our buckets just spill over. We do this stuff every day - conversations happen. Imagine the Holy Spirit veering them over to where he wants them to go. If we're perceptive and listening, and if we're open, he'll steer a conversation, and we can simply follow the Holy Spirit down that track. We go where we're invited and tell our story - what God has done for us.

Are we perfect? - *no*. Are we different? - *Yes, absolutely!* Then why not *ask* somebody if they've ever received Jesus Christ as their Savior? And, if they say no, say, *"Why not? What's wrong with right now? Would you want to do that now?"* It can be just a simple prayer for someone to receive Jesus, and they can start down the track of discipleship and be baptized.

Prayer

Father, in Jesus' name, we take this moment to recognize Your presence here with us. Holy Spirit we acknowledge You and we invite You to fall on us afresh right now - baptize us afresh as we come in faith to receive. Cleanse us and fill us. Renew in us the joy and peace that comes from Your presence. Tune us so that we recognize the God-moments and the encounters that You're about to bring us into this week. Help us to not miss the moments and give us the courage and the boldness to engage them by faith. Lord we worship You and we give You honor. In Jesus' name. Amen