



# 14 | ACTS 8:5-25

## GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIANS

*If you have God's heart, you will tell the lost of Jesus.*

### Outline

- 1. WE LEAVE OUR COMFORT ZONE (8:5-8)**  
The Gospel Opens New Areas  
The Gospel Brings New Attention  
The Gospel Brings New Authentication  
The Gospel Brings New Animation
- 2. WE ARE LEERY OF FALSE CONVERSIONS (8:9-13)**  
A Famous Con Artist  
A False Conversion
- 3. WE LOOK FOR THE SPIRIT'S CONFIRMATION (8:14-24)**  
The Unity of the Church  
The Purity of the Church
- 4. WE LONG FOR UNSTOPPABLE CONVERSIONS (8:25)**  
*Applications*

### Call to Worship

Sing praises to the Lord, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds! —Psalm 9:11

### Songs

*Blessed be Your Name*

*Praise to the Lord the Almighty*

*Cornerstone*

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

*In Christ Alone / The Solid Rock*

### Introduction

We continue our series in the book of Acts called "Life on Life Discipleship." Our title this morning is: "Great Commission Christians".

All growing Christians want to bear fruit for Jesus. We want to see people embrace Jesus and follow him faithfully. Discipleship is not just learning to walk with Christ, it is to introduce others to him. Jesus told us to go and evangelize all nations. Are you a great commission

Christian? Do you have a heart for the lost? From what we can tell from this passage, bearing the fruit of souls and conversions is not as hard as people might make it. When the Spirit of God is moving, he can do in five seconds what people cannot do in five years of all the best planning. Jesus said:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.  
—*John 15:5*

Remember Jesus' command was that the Gospel was to spread to Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the world. Jesus' last words before he ascended to heaven were clear.

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 1:8*

We see this incredible fruit in Acts chapter 8 with the expansion of the Gospel to Samaria. For years the Jewish people hated the Samaritans. They felt they were lower than the dogs, even lower than the Gentiles. There was a real prejudice and even racism. But the Gospel changes that. The Gospel brings us together as one Body and one forever family. God wants his family to be from every tribe, family, and nation.

Remember Jesus' command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel first to Judea and Samaria and to the farthest reaches of the world. Here we witness the Gospel's power expanding to a new people group. The main point we learn is that if you have God's heart, you will tell the lost of Jesus. We see here that **the Gospel takes us out of our comfort zone**, since God doesn't just want us to reach people who look like us. He wants us to reach people of every tribe, culture, and nation. This study is not a guilt trip. Evangelism ought not to be done because your arm is being twisted. Instead, evangelism is the love letter we send to the world when we realize we ourselves have been forgiven of so much. We want to have the longing heart of God for people to be saved. God did more than say, "I love you." He sent his only Son to die for the sins of an unworthy world.

When I came to know Christ, I thought, "If this is true, why hasn't someone told me this before?" Of course, many had told me, but I didn't have ears to hear at the time. The point is, now that I knew, I wanted every single person in the world to know of God's love. This was Philip's motive. A deep desire to evangelize is a major evidence of the Spirit's good work in you, and that you are a Christian. When God's love in Christ truly gets ahold of us, like Philip, we want to preach the gospel to the lost. As great commission Christians you are going to see four things happen if you have a burden for souls.

- We leave our comfort zone.
- We are leery of false conversions.
- We look for the Spirit's confirmation.
- We long for unstoppable conversions.

Key thought: If you have God's heart, you will tell the lost of Jesus.

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## 1. WE LEAVE OUR COMFORT ZONE (8:5-8)

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**Acts 8:5** | Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

Philip went down to Samaria to preach. “Down” doesn’t refer to going south, because Samaria is north—it refers to going downhill. Remember that Jerusalem is built upon Mount Moriah, the high point in the area. Everyone who goes to Jerusalem, goes “up” to Jerusalem. When you leave Jerusalem, no matter where you go, you are going “down.”

So Philip went down from Jerusalem north to Samaria. Remember Philip is one of the seven deacon prototypes. One preacher, Stephen, had already been executed by Saul of Tarsus. Philip continued his ministry despite the intense persecution going on. As we think about Philip, ask yourself, “Am I an evangelist?” Not all have the gift of evangelism, but all have the command to evangelize. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19a). Are you bearing fruit through evangelism? You ought to preach the Gospel to every person since God promises to bless it and bring a harvest of souls (Isa 55:11; Mk 16:15). We see this in Philip’s example.

### THE GOSPEL OPENS NEW AREAS

We read that Philip goes to the Samaritans. This was a despised group. It was a hated group. But remember the Gospel brings the walls of hostility down (Eph 2:14). was willing to venture into a new people group. Normally if a Samaritan wanted to follow the Lord, they would have to leave their culture and become Jewish. Philip, obeying the Lord’s command to break down cultural barriers and redeem the culture for Christ, brings the Gospel to those who were once formerly despised in Israel: the Samaritans.

**Acts 8:5** | Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

In Judea tens of thousands were being saved, but there was also a great persecution taking place. Philip, led by the Spirit, goes to Samaria to preach. Samaria was different than Judea. There was a long-standing animosity between Jews and Samaritans. However, that did not deter Philip, one of Stephen’s colleagues on the board of appointed alms givers (Acts 6:5), from going to “a city of Samaria” (8:5) and preaching the gospel there. Which city it was is not stated; perhaps it was Gitta, which Justin Martyr (himself a native of Samaria) tells us was the home of Simon Magus (8:9). It would be interesting if the city were proved to be in the vicinity of Sychar where Jesus had met the woman at the well. That Philip’s preaching found such joyful acceptance would be easy to understand if he found himself among the people with whom Jesus had once spent two days (Jn 4:40). In that case, others had labored (notably the Lord himself) and Philip was now entering into their labors and reaping where they had sown (Jn 4:38).<sup>1</sup>

### THE GOSPEL BRINGS NEW ATTENTION

Philip’s preaching brought a new interest. No longer was it the droning and speculation of the teachers. Here was a kind of preaching that brought rapt attention when they heard Philip.

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<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 8:1b–8.

**Acts 8:6a** | And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him...

Philip's message was one of hope and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. Philip's message was the same as Stephen's before and Paul after him. The law never delivered anyone. The law points us to Jesus.

Gospel preaching encourages Christians. We hear that Jesus paid it all. The same way we are saved is the same way we are sanctified. Many Christians are bored with moralistic preaching. "Do better. Work harder." That's not the Christian message. Christ says, "Come to me and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Rest in Christ. Stop your works. Just experience his love, and you will gladly work for him. "Whoever is forgiven much, loves much" (Lk 7:47). When you experience the Gospel of the majestic God of heaven coming down to rescue lowly, wretched sinners like us, suddenly the love of God gets ahold of you and your heart is alive with joy. This is the draw of the Gospel. People pay attention to a Gospel that is actually good news. "Do better" is not good news. It's actually devastating and despairing. **There's no end to "doing better."** The difference between the Gospel and every other religion is six letters.

Religion says, DO. Christ says DONE.

Christ has done it all! It is finished. Rest in the finished work of Christ. Receive his love and watch the love of God swell in your heart. **That gets people's attention.**

### THE GOSPEL BRINGS NEW AUTHENTICATION

It wasn't just the word of God that was proclaimed. There was a credibility that was apparent by the signs and wonders. People's lives were dramatically changed. There was a new credibility.

**Acts 8:6b-7** | They ...saw the signs that he did. <sup>7</sup>For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

As the Gospel is preached, lives will be radically changed. Here Philip was casting out demons, and they were crying out in a loud voice. Demons often cried out when they were cast out of an individual (*cf* Mk 1:23, 26; 3:11; 5:7; Lk 4:33, 41), perhaps in **rage and protest**.<sup>2</sup> Paralyzed people and people who had deformed limbs were healed. It would be like **John Soen** getting out of his wheelchair. Just imagine!

Sometimes God does this through healings. We have seen this in our congregation. One brother **Mike Moffat** not too many years ago was given two weeks to live. We prayed for healing. He needed a liver transplant, or he was going to die. Suddenly we found he had moved up to the top of the list and a liver came in. He's walking around like Lazarus today. We've heard of visions and dreams where lost people were introduced to Jesus, were pointed to a church where they came to hear the Gospel and be saved. We know that God does miracles today, but we see them most where the word of God and the Gospel are being authenticated. During the times of the apostles, there was a great authentication with the word through signs and miracles.

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 234.

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.  
—*Hebrews 2:3-4*

Remember though that the sure word of prophecy we have in the word of God is infinitely greater than any miracle.

This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. <sup>19</sup> We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. —*2 Peter 1:18-19, KJV*

One thing we can agree on is that the **greatest miracle of all is the transformation of lives** by the gospel and the joy that comes as a result.

### THE GOSPEL BRINGS NEW ANIMATION

When a person comes to know Jesus, there is joy. That's why a Christian doesn't have to change his circumstances. Knowing Jesus replaces all other ambitions. That's where true and meaningful joy comes from. This happened with the preaching of the Gospel in Samaria.

**Acts 8:8** | So there was much joy in that city.

As your life begins to change in Jesus, there is much joy, and that's what happened in the Samaritan city where Philip preached. When people are converted to Christ, there is great joy.

There's always joy when Jesus is present. There's always joy when there is real revival, joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Christian life is one that always leads to joy, not in the improvement of our circumstances, but the joy that comes from knowing Jesus alone. This is what evangelism is all about.

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## 2. WE ARE LEERY OF FALSE CONVERSIONS (8:9-13)

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One great distraction in evangelism is what we might call false conversions. How can you know if someone is truly following Christ? How do you know if a person is converted? There is a difference between calling and conversion. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14). The gospel call goes out to every creature. But only those who come by faith and show the fruit of faith demonstrate they are chosen. There is an **external call** that goes out to everyone. But have come to grips with the **internal call** of God that has changed your heart?

So many have professed faith in Christ with no change in their life. That's what we find here in Acts 8:9 when Philip meets a man by the name of Simon the Great. He's a con artist and a faker. Philip is going to see great fruit, but also great distractions, especially from Simon. You know, when God opens the windows of heavens to bless us, the devil opens the doors of hell to blast us.

**Acts 8:9** | But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.

When the power of the Spirit is poured out and the borders of God's kingdom expand, expect satanic attack. This time it comes in the form of this con artist.

### **A FAMOUS CON ARTIST**

Simon Magus is a famous magician from Samaria. He's a true con artist. He's convinced people that he's someone important. He's even learned to do great magic to impress people with miracles. By the way, you know that Satan can do wonders as he tries to imitate the power of God. There was force in what this man was doing, and the people were all dazzled by it. Listen to how Satan had used this satanic power to bring attention to Simon.

**Acts 8:9-11** | But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. <sup>10</sup>They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." <sup>11</sup>And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

Here Simon is doing magic. This is not just illusion; it is witchcraft. The power of Satan is alive and well in America today. Witchcraft is alive and well in Chicagoland today. There are new age, satanic philosophies that are alive and well in many churches. I'm telling you the truth. Many people are dazzled by this. They fail to understand that there is a power from the unseen world that is not from God. What Simon was doing was not just a bag of cheap tricks. It's not just that he was an illusionist—he was in league with the devil.

**Whenever there is revival, you can expect satanic opposition.**

The opposition here comes from a false conversion.

### **A FALSE CONVERSION**

Just because people profess faith in Christ does not make them truly born again. Faith does not come from mere words but must come from the heart. The words can say one thing, and the heart can believe another. True believers love Jesus from the heart. The new birth is a mystery, and only God knows the heart. The only way we can truly test a true convert is by the good fruit that comes from good soil throughout their life. "By their fruit you shall know them," Jesus said (Mt 7:16).

**Acts 8:12-13** | When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

The devil is a counterfeiter, and he loves creating a false imitation. Rather than to deny the faith, he counterfeits the faith, and that is doubly dangerous.

In the book of Matthew, chapter 13, Jesus tells the parable of the soils. He gives four soils, symbolizing different heart attitudes toward the Gospel. Only one of the soils is good. Three are hard hearts. One is hardened by the world (pathway). Another is hardened by worries (thorns). Another is hardened by weariness (rocky). There's only one good, truly believing heart in the parable.

How many times do we see people profess faith in Christ, but then they quickly fall away! Look for the fruit. Jesus said,

By their fruit you shall know them. —*Matthew 7:16*

The powerful miracles and preaching of Philip resulted, as it had in Jerusalem, in the salvation of many Samaritans. But as true biblical preaching inevitably does, it produced another vastly different response. Some accepted the gospel, believing and reacting with much rejoicing. Others were superficial hearers, false converts who were nothing but the tares and weeds.<sup>3</sup> They were pretenders and fakes. But there is a confirming seal that all believers are given: the Holy Spirit.

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### 3. WE LOOK FOR THE SPIRIT'S CONFIRMATION (8:14-24)

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When people are born again, the Spirit will confirm them with his filling and his spiritual fruit. That's true for every believer, even though it was a bit of a delay for the Samaritans, but for good reason. We get to see the Spirit of God being poured out onto the Samaritans. But there is a delay.

#### THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

**Acts 8:14-17** | Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,<sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,<sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

*One Multicultural, Universal Church.* Why did the Samaritans (and later the Gentiles) have to wait for the apostles before receiving the Spirit? For centuries, the Samaritans and the Jews had been bitter rivals. If the Samaritans had received the Spirit independent of the Jerusalem church, that rift would have been perpetuated. There could well have been two separate churches, a Jewish church and a Samaritan church. But God has designed one church that is united by Christ alone. The church is not solely Jewish, but is from “every tribe, tongue, people, and language.” As Paul says:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. —*Galatians 3:28-29*

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<sup>3</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 234–235.

By delaying the Spirit's coming until Peter and John arrived, God preserved the unity of the church. The apostles needed to see for themselves, and give firsthand testimony to the Jerusalem church, that the Spirit came upon the Samaritans. The Samaritans also needed to learn that they were subject to apostolic authority. The Jewish believers and the Samaritans were thus linked together into one body.<sup>4</sup>

*The Spirit Confirms.* Remember that the Holy Spirit is God's seal of ownership. All true Christians have the imprint of the Spirit on their hearts. This is what unifies us.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. —*Ephesians 1:13-14*

*The Church Unifies.* The doctrine of the church's unity is what we need for this day and time. At a time when our culture is looking to divide us through the media, the church stands with the only solution for a divided society. The culture lifts up the problems but gives no real solutions. They want us divided. It is only in Christ that people come together as one, and it is only by the Spirit that indwells all true believers.

### THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH

Unity is not the only difficulty of the church. Martin Luther's slogan was "Peace if possible; truth at all costs." Elders and pastors admit people into the church. We are called to bring people into the church. People are baptized and become members of God's local churches. We want a pure, regenerated church membership. We want all to be born again. But it's impossible to know the true motives of everyone who makes a profession of faith in Christ. There will be some who falsely come into the church. We see that with Simon Magnus.

**Acts 8:18-24** | Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

<sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." <sup>24</sup> And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

**Simon shows his true colors.** When Peter and John arrived, they began laying their hands on the Samaritan believers, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. That was too much for Simon. When he saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money. Philip had impressed him with his preaching, but Peter and John overwhelmed him with the manifestation of the Spirit upon these Samaritan believers. Perhaps they began speaking in tongues like at Pentecost. Regardless, they were manifestly filled with the Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, Acts, vol 1, 245.

Simon asked them brashly and excitedly, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” He treated the Spirit like the magic he practiced. He attempted to negotiate the price to buy the secret of the Spirit’s power. In Simon’s world everything had a price. The Spirit of God had a market value to him. He set a cash value on spiritual things and offered the apostles money. By this act, Simon gave his name to the term “simony,” which through history has referred to the buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices.<sup>5</sup>

*God’s Salvation is Free.* Nothing God has, however, is for sale—certainly not the Holy Spirit! Indeed, there is nothing sinful men have to offer him. Salvation and spiritual blessing are free gifts God loves to pour out. In Isaiah God cries out,

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. — *Isaiah 55:1*

*Simon the Pliable.* Simon wasn’t really the “great” one. He was the pliable one. Simon Magnus was a false convert. He liked magic when he was around his witchcraft people. He liked God and the Bible and the Spirit when he was around Christians. He was like “Pliable” in the story of Pilgrim’s progress. Whoever Pliable is around, he’s like them. But no Pliable is a true Christian. They’re a flimsy imitation. We remember Demas who was a companion to the Apostle Paul. He had been faithful. But in 2 Timothy Paul writes of his apostasy.

Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. —2 *Timothy 4:2*

*False converts are actors.* They are in it for themselves. Don’t be discouraged by the false converts that may arise. We’ve seen men, even preachers, who seemed to handle the word wisely fall into great sin and even walk away from the faith. Don’t be surprised, for Jesus said this would happen.

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” —*Matthew 7:21-23, NKJV*

We as elders are diligent as much as is possible in keeping our church pure. But we cannot see into anyone’s heart. We do warn those who give bad fruit of their peril, just like the apostles warned Simon Magnus.

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## 4. WE LONG FOR UNSTOPPABLE CONVERSIONS (8:25)

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Despite satanic distractions and false converts, Christ will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, Acts, vol 1, *ibid.*

**Acts 8:25** | Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

The story concludes with a note of how the apostles themselves, on their way back to Jerusalem, preached to the people and evangelized many Samaritan villages. The despised Samaritans were being saved and brought into the kingdom!<sup>6</sup>

On the way back, the apostles stopped in village after village, testifying of God's grace and love through Jesus. They saturated the province of Samaria with the gospel. Thus, the next phase of world evangelism was accomplished. Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria had heard the Gospel. Now the state is set to evangelize "the uttermost parts of the earth."<sup>7</sup> What about you? Are you leaving your comfort zone and reaching the people God put around you?

### *Applications*

1. *Share the Gospel.* What are some ways we can share the Gospel? A good question to begin with is: "If you God were to ask you, why should I let you into my heaven," what would you say? This reveals where the person's heart is. Most people will say, I'm a good person. You can show them from the law how greatly they need Christ. "Have you ever told a lie? You're a liar. 'All liars have their part in the lake of fire,' the Bible says (Rev 21:8). Have you ever looked with lust? Jesus says, you are an adulterer in your heart. It's not enough to not murder. Jesus says if you have anger toward someone, you've committed murder in your heart. If you've stole, you're a thief. Does it concern you that you are a lying, thieving, adulterous murderer, and you have to face a holy God on judgment day? From that moment you can give the solution to that person. You can tell them, "Christ doesn't want you to perish. He's paid the debt you could not pay. He died for your sins on the cross. He takes your rags of sin and gives you his robe of righteousness (2 Cor 5:21)." Then you urge them to put their faith in Christ. So share the gospel. You may not be able to give an articulate gospel presentation, but you can give people a gospel tract. You can share your testimony of how you came to know Christ.

2. *Search your heart.* Can you really say you are a growing Christian if you are not sharing the Gospel, not obeying our Lord's last Word to us (Acts 1:8)?

3. *Pray for the lost.* Would you think of 3 people right now that you can pray for and witness to? Would you be willing to take some Gospel tracts and hand them out? Would you be willing to invite at least one person to church in the next few weeks?

### *Conclusion*

I want to bear fruit as I am connected to the vine. If I am to bear fruit, I must be willing to preach to all people. Is there someone in your life that you are praying for right now? Are you willing to share Jesus Christ with them?

### *Evangelism at Work*

Do you have stories of conversions? You ought to. I started evangelizing as a sixteen-year-old kid. I worked at Ponderosa and on my breaks, I would sit down with an open Bible

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<sup>6</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 169.

<sup>7</sup> J. Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, Ac 8:25.

and go through the Romans Road with anyone who would listen. If all you know is John 3:16, you can evangelize.

### *Evangelism with Friends*

Are you praying for people to come to Christ? My best friend growing up was Ralph Jr. I remember praying for Ralph's father, Ralph Sr., who was dying of cancer. I prayed every day for his salvation. I was sixteen years old and had no way to give the gospel to him. I remember him coming over to our house, and he was so swollen from the radiation therapy for his leukemia, he looked like a large plum. After many months, I heard he passed away, and I was broken with sorrow. I had prayed so earnestly, but it seemed God had not answered. As far as I knew he died without Christ and was suffering in hell. I went to his funeral distraught when my best friend Ralph Jr. introduced me to his Uncle Lee who was a Christian wrestler who worked with Athletes in Action. Uncle Lee exploded with some great news: three months before Ralph Sr. died, he had come to a saving knowledge of Christ and was excited to grow and change in his final three months. Ralph Sr. was born again and in heaven. I began jumping up and down in the funeral parlor, praising God for answered prayer. Sometimes you cannot even give the gospel to someone, but you can pray for them. Pray! God will answer. It may not be through you.

### *Evangelism with Family*

Are you praying and witnessing to your family? I witnessed to my twin sister Tammie for ten years, from the time we were fifteen to age twenty-five. During that time, I also fasted and prayed constantly for her soul. For so many years she rejected the gospel. One day I heard about a church that was near our childhood home in Louisiana, and I asked her to visit there. It was such a tiny church in the backwoods bayou of Louisiana, a mile into the woods. After the service Tammie called me.

She burst out: "I'm saved!"

"What? What do you mean, you're 'saved'?" I asked.

She told me how the preacher had told her how Jesus died for a world of sinners and that Christ had died for her. After the service a little girl of twelve years, the pastor's daughter, who was sitting next to her, spoke to her about the message.

Tammie said, "I'm too big a sinner for God to save me."

The little girl replied, "Well that's just who God saves. He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

She told me how the pastor came over and pointed her to Christ and she was saved.

I said, "Are you sure? Did you do it right?" I was so nervous and completely amazed. God had answered my prayers!

### *Evangelism at Impossible People*

Are you praying and witnessing to people you think would never come to Christ? One of the most profound illustrations of this is the story of my dearest friends, Cedric and Nicole. I'll never forget sitting at their kitchen table on October 31, 2011. Cedric was a five-time felon, and Nicole was an Italian girl who grew up Catholic. Both were into the drug scene. They were desperate. They had gotten married in Las Vegas in a fly-by-night wedding. Nicole was desperate and showed up at church one Sunday.

"Can you talk to us? Is there any hope?" she said. I assured here there was hope in Jesus.

I visited their home and we started studying through Ephesians for several weeks. One evening, we got to that place in Ephesians 2, where it says we were “dead in our trespasses and sins” – and then it says, “But God who is rich in mercy raised us up with Christ...”

I’ll never forget, Cedric interrupted and said, “Pastor, I got to pray!”

Nicole at that time being a proper Italian Catholic, said, “Cedric, don’t interrupt the priest! We’re here to learn from ‘Father Matt’.”

I chuckled at her calling me “Father Matt,” but I told her – “The Spirit is giving birth to Cedric. He is about to be a new creation. Just as when you gave birth to your children, you couldn’t hold it back, so the Spirit is birthing Cedric into the Kingdom.”

With that Cedric prayed with such an intensity and fervency, it was as if it was just him and God in the room, and he was swept into the glorious Kingdom of God by faith in Jesus. And then Nicole followed right after and was born again! Cedric has grown so much and is now a preacher of God’s word. Nicole is our church secretary. Don’t ever think there are any impossible conversions. God can save anyone! God can do great things if you would just make yourself available. Are you available?