

“A Changed Life”

Acts 8:4-8, 26-40

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The title of the message today is: **What To Do When God Says “Go!”**

That word “go” while it is a VERY small word, it has some incredibly HUGE implications. It’s a word that is used over 1500x in scripture. The mass majority of those times, God is speaking to one of his prophets or to one of his kings...or Jesus is speaking to one of his disciples and essentially the message is this: “Now, that I have given you instruction...now that I’ve asked you to do this...GO!”

- “Go fulfill the task that I’ve asked you to complete...”
- “Go do what I’ve asked you to do...”

It’s a word that requires action...and here is the thesis that I want to put forward today. You could call it the sermon in a sentence. It’s this: **Good things happen when God says, “Go!”**

Now, that’s not all of the sentence...I’ll give you the the rest of it toward the end of the message, but this will get us started for today – “Good things happen when God says, “Go!”

We heard testimony regarding this last weekend. We had Missionary and Pastor Andrew Brunson with us and when God called him to “GO” to Turkey, he went and as a result:

- many people trusted Jesus...
- Churches were planted and built up...
- refugees were served in Christ’s name.

Good things happened. Even in going to prison for two years, while at the time he didn’t feel like that was good or that anything good could come from it, looking back he sees that God did some things in his heart and with his faith that NOW he is so grateful for, and that his imprisonment ushered in an unprecedented prayer movement on behalf of Turkey - “Good things happen when God says, “Go!”.

This week I had the opportunity to be connected with one of our church members that serves with the International Mission Board. Jarod and Jennifer Davis (**Show pic**).

He and his wife have an amazing story. He was an architect and sensed the Lord calling him to “Go” to China as a missionary. He followed God’s call and through a series of events and circumstances, they are now based in Taiwan leading an effort to help raise up the largest group of Asian missionaries in history!

When I was put in contact with his family this week via FaceTime, Jarod was actually in Kenya commissioning 5 Taiwanese missionaries to serve in Africa. I spoke with his wife, Jennifer and

are you ready for this? She said, “you don’t know me, but I know you and we have been watching the services at Champion Forest nearly every weekend.”

She said that her children are so excited at all the baptisms they see and that their 6 year old is already having conversations with them about baptism and what it means because she sees them so often here at Champion Forest. I told her to just wait for this weekend because she is going to see some more at the end of this service!

How cool is that? Can we just let Jarod and Jennifer know right now that we love them and as their home church, we are supporting them!

I’m telling you, Andrew Brunson would say this...Jarod and Jennifer Davis would say this...Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch who we are looking at today in scripture would say this as well: **Good things happen when God says, “Go!”**

We saw last week in Acts chapter 8 that the persecution of the early church caused the church to scatter. Many of the people that had trusted Jesus at Pentecost because of the intense persecution were now leaving Jerusalem and going into the regions of Judea and Samara (8:2).

As they went though, the scripture says that they took the gospel with them. We see this starting in (v. 4) and we are introduced in detail to a man named, Philip.

Now, we first met Philip back in Acts 6, when he was listed as one of the seven men that were chosen by the church to serve the widows whose needs were being neglected. He is described just as Stephen was as a man (Acts 6:3) of having a good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom.

Here in Acts 8, we read of his ministry once he left Jerusalem. Listen to **Acts 8:4-8** – **“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.** (This is always the emphasis...those who were scattered went preaching and they weren’t preaching their own opinions or thoughts. They were preaching the word. And that word was the gospel – prophecy was fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. He is God’s Messiah!) ⁵ **Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.**⁶ **And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.** ⁷ **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.** ⁸ **So there was much joy in that city.”**

Now, we can’t stay here long, but I do think it’s important to note two things here. One, we’ve noted throughout our study in Acts - God is using normal, average everyday people here to accomplish his purposes.

Philip was not an apostle...he was not professional clergy. The only thing that appears to be special about Philip is his reputation. He was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. I’m telling you, God LOVES using ordinary people full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

Secondly, note that Philip goes to Samaria preaching Christ. If you've been in church for a long time, you know about the Samaritans.

The Samaritans and the Jews didn't get along very well...there was A LOT of animosity between these two people groups for various reasons.

One, the Samaritans did something during exile that you simply weren't supposed to do and that is they had mixed their bloodline...they intermarried with people from other nations!

Not only that they had built their own temple, claiming it's authority over the temple in Jerusalem, and so the hatred and prejudice toward the people of Samaria couldn't have been worse!

And yet this is exactly where Philip goes! He goes preaching Christ to:

- these "low life's"...
- these despised traitors...
- these gross, immoral infidels...
- these sell-outs...

It was the LAST place the Jewish religious leaders would go, and yet it's the FIRST place we see this godly man, Philip going. And we see in this: **Good things happen when God says, "Go!"**

Look at the result of his ministry: **Acts 8:3 – "So there was much joy in that city."**

I bet there hadn't been joy in Samaria in a long time! And now, because of the preaching of the gospel...because God says "GO!", a people who probably at the core of their belief system feared that they had gone too far to have a relationship with God...people who probably knew deep down inside that they were unworthy of God's love...they hear the message of Christ:

- That he loves them...
- That he gave his life for them...
- That he was raised from the dead...
- That he offers them life and forgiveness of sin in his name...

And they receive the word and are saved...and as a result there is much joy in the city. Listen to me: **Good things happen when God says, "Go!"**

And it's really good that Philip is learning this lesson because God is about to tell him to GO somewhere else.

Acts 8:26 - "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." This is a desert place."

Now, just speaking honestly here, but this would be my response to that command: "Excuse me? I must not be hearing you correctly, God!"

- What do you mean leave Samaria?! I'm killing it here!
- You don't see the miraculous taking place? I mean I just led (v. 9-13) David Blaine to Jesus – Simon the Magician!
- Did you not see the invitation I led in at the end of that last sermon? People are jiving with the message I'm delivering.
- Things are going well...I'm gaining more followers on Instagram and Twitter...more friends on Facebook. They are making Tik-Toks of me, Lord!
- It's going so good here in Samaria! I'm comfortable here in Samaria....

And now you want me to go to some desert place where there is little to no traffic at all? What's that all about?

To me, this "ask" doesn't make sense...that's me though! Philip is more full of the Holy Spirit than me! He has learned quicker than me that: Good things happen when God says "Go!"

So, notice: He doesn't question...he doesn't whine...he doesn't complain. Instead, he goes! He instantly obeys!

Acts 8:27-28 – “And he rose and went. (and look at what happens – talk about good things happen when God says Go!) 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 ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.”

Now, we don't know the spiritual temperature of this man from Ethiopia, but he was a seeker of some sort. Evidently, he had made the 150-200 mile journey from Ethiopia to Jerusalem and was on his way back there.

This man served in the highest court of the Queen. Most scholars believe that because he was a eunuch – and men during this time would volunteer to become eunuchs because it represented devotion and loyalty...these men would work in close relationship to the female queen, and becoming a eunuch would prohibit for the most part any form of betrayal sexually.

Most scholars believe eunuchs were probably the most trusted officials in the Queen's cabinet so to speak perhaps even giving oversight to the treasury of the particular country.

Had to be a tough job to recruit for...can't imagine that job interview – “Anything else I need to know?” Well...one more thing!” Ha!

We don't know much about this man, but we do know he had to be

God-fearing. He comes to Jerusalem the Bible says to worship and you have to wonder what he experienced while there!

As a eunuch, this man was not allowed to worship in the temple (Deut. 23:1). I'm sure he was disappointed in that after making the long trip. Maybe in his search for God, he saw the emptiness of the religious life in and around Jerusalem.

I don't know if he was leaving glad he made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem or sad that he did, what we do know is that he had picked up a scroll while there...maybe it was like a souvenir.

He has this scroll and he is reading the prophet, Isaiah. **Acts 8:29-33** – **“And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”** (another “go”! The first one was to Samaria...the second to this desert road to Gaza and now “go” join the chariot! Prayer you need to start praying: God, make me sensitive to the Holy Spirit – John 10:27) ³⁰ **So Philip ran** (Question: when's the last time you ran to do whatever it is God asked of you?) **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 and sit with him.** (If you write in your Bibles, make sure you write these words out beside this text: This is NOT a coincidence! The Spirit of God doesn't lead us to coincidences! God is arranging this meeting!) ³² **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.”**³³ **In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”**

This is a portion of scripture from the prophet, Isaiah. It's pretty much a direct quote from Isaiah 53:7-9. This is the portion of scripture we know of as “Suffering Servant”.

If you've never read the words of Isaiah 53, go read them today. It's probably the most detailed prophecy we have of Jesus in the Old Testament specifically concerning his suffering and death.

Illus. Reformation Day - You know today is Halloween for the world, but it's Reformation Day for the Christian.

It's on this day in 1517 the German monk, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenburg Castle Church challenging the Catholic church's authority and their sales of indulgences.

Let's honor him on this Reformation Day. He wrote that these words of Isaiah 53 – **Martin Luther** – **“ought to be written on parchment of gold and lettered in diamonds.”**

Why? Because it's poignant prophecy that points directly to Jesus. Who he is and how he would suffer. This man from Ethiopia though...he doesn't know who Jesus is.

Acts 8:34-35 – “**And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”** (My goodness gracious, this is a softball question if I’ve ever seen one! And look at how Philip responds...it’s how we all must respond if we are to be faithful witnesses) ³⁵**Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”**

I LOVE this! Philip opened his mouth and told him the good news about Jesus! Jesus said, we’d be his witnesses in Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. It’s happening right here!

What is a witness? A witness testifies to what they have seen and heard.

This is what Philip is doing. In THIS moment he is simply being a witness and beginning with this scripture in Isaiah 53 he told this man the good news about Jesus.

All of the scripture points to Jesus! I am in a discipleship relationship with a young leader in our church right now and this is what we talked about this week...that you can take any scripture – from the Law to the prophets to the psalms...and they point to Jesus!

Illus. Road to Emmaus – remember what happened on the road to Emmaus? (tell story)

Luke 23:27 – “**And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.**” – (v. 32 – did our hearts not burn within us?)

All of scripture points to Jesus! Makes much of Jesus. Shows us Jesus. I can promise you when you come to Champion Forest, it doesn’t matter what text or passage we are preaching that day, eventually it’s going to get to Jesus!

Philip just showed this man Jesus from Isaiah 53. Jesus was the sheep led to the slaughter and opened not his mouth while being accused and condemned. And Philip told this man how Jesus died, shed his blood for him and was raised to life...and this message brought conviction!

And let me just say this...when you combine the word of God (Rom. 10:17 – faith comes by hearing...) with the Spirit God, you’ll ALWAYS get the conviction of God!

This man was convicted...and what was his response?

Acts 8:36 – “**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?”**

This man in hearing the gospel of Jesus wanted to immediately identify with Jesus in the waters of baptism...this is what baptism is...it’s identifying with Jesus.

When Jesus becomes the Lord of your life, you follow him in what is called believer’s baptism. It’s kind of like getting your license...that’s your identification as a believer.

Water baptism doesn't save you, it's a symbol that you are saved!

For the follower of Jesus, baptism is by immersion – this is what the word means...to “dip” or to “plunge”. You go all the way under and all the way up because baptism symbolizes...it's a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

It always comes AFTER your confession of Christ. Some of your Bibles don't have (v. 37) in them...there is a note there and it's in smaller print at the bottom of the page. Don't let that mess you up.

Acts 8:37 – “And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

It's written like this because most scholars believe this verse was added by a scribe at a later time...most early manuscripts don't have this verse. It was added to give clarification (none was really needed) but it was added to give clarification to WHEN baptism occurs.

The man from Ethiopia hears the gospel and says, “Let's do this, I'm in...here's water, let's get baptized.” He believed and was ready to identify with Christ. And look at what happened!

Acts 8:38 – “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, (in the water! Immersed!) Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.”

Water baptism ALWAYS follows confessing Jesus as Lord...AND it should take place IMMEDIATELY AFTER confessing Jesus as Lord. It's been called the believer's first step of obedience and we have seen this throughout the book of Acts and will continue to!

Acts 2:41 – “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

Here in Acts 8, it's the Ethiopian eunuch – immediately baptized. Acts 9, it's Paul. In Acts 10, it's the centurion, Cornelius and his entire family – instant upon belief in Christ. In Acts 16, it's the Philippian jailer and his entire family were baptized “at once”.

The rule...the norm in scripture is when you trust in Jesus, you follow him in believer's baptism. The statement we've seen carried throughout this message:

Good things happen when God says, “Go!”

I told you at the beginning though...there is more to that sentence. Let me finish it for you:

Good things happen when God says, “Go!”, and we don't say, “No!”

That last phrase is SO important! God can command us to “go” but in order for the good things to happen, we have to obey! We can't say, “No!” Look at it in this passage!

- When Philip is called to Samaria – he obeys...and good things happen. What if he didn't go? What if he had said no?!
- When Philip is called to the desert – he obeys...and obeys instantly...the scripture says (v. 27) – he rose and went! And good things happen! What if he had said, “No!”?!
- When Philip is told to go to the chariot (v. 29), he “runs” to it...and look at what happens. A man gets saved...good things happen! What if he would have said, “No!”

How much would change in our lives if we just decided that whenever God spoke “Go” into our hearts, we were going to instantly obey...we were going to arise and go...and not just go, like Philip here we are going to go running!

I titled the message: What to do when God says, “Go!”. Well, the answer is, “Go!” Whatever you do, don't say, “No!”. Do what he tells you to do and do it immediately! Good things WILL happen!

Is God is calling to share Jesus with a friend? He's told you to “Go”! What are you waiting on? Go.

Some of you like Andrew and Norine Brunson and Jarod and Jennifer Davis, God has said, “Go”! But you aren't obeying! What good things are you leaving on the table? It's time to obey!

Some of you like this Ethiopian Eunuch have heard the gospel and received Christ, but you've never been baptized and today through this message you are hearing the Spirit of God say, “Go” – some of you need to obey! Good things are awaiting if you'll just follow God's go. And as it relates to baptism, do it now.

Across our campuses, we have over 50 already signed up to be baptized and we want you to join them. Don't say, “No!” Don't say, “Not yet!”.

I've never met anyone who regretted being baptized...it's so worth it! And in closing let me just share some pictures and stories of people baptized to encourage those of you that haven't yet made this decision to do it today...right now!

I promise you the people you see in these pictures, they would say if you are hearing God say go, don't say, “No!” But instead “GO!” and “Go now!”

Illus. Baptism pics and stories

1. John Potter – (show pic)
2. Eric Stephens – (show pic)
3. Pushcar – (show pic)
4. Chris Peterson – (show pic)

Good things happen when God says, “Go!”, and we obey.

Be obedient today...confess Christ...and follow him in baptism.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.