



SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY

Discipleship Plan

**Year Four
Fourth Quarter
Evangelism**

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Fourth Quarter – Evangelism

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Lesson One: Evangelism and Exposition - Him We Proclaim

Primary Verses: “Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to 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.’ And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.” Acts 8:32-35 (ESV)

Teaching Text: Acts 8:26-40 (also Acts 8:1-4 for background)

Supporting Text: Isaiah 53; Colossians 1:24-29

Little children are easily distracted from what is essential because their eyes are often on what is slick and shiny. But adults have proven to be just as prone to this poor application of focused attention. The supernatural circumstances surrounding Philip’s encounter with the dignified Ethiopian from Candace’s court are worthy of examination if for no other reason than the fact that such details are given to us in the Scriptures. However, if we focus too much on the *unusual* outbreak of God’s divine direction, we may miss the opportunity to be illumined as to the *normative* directive that every believer—with miraculous/angelic assistance or not—should be following.

It is in the context of immediate persecution flowing from Jerusalem (the stoning of Stephen) that the Early Church makes the first recorded (although unplanned and spontaneous) effort to spread the gospel in the pattern that Jesus had outlined in Acts 1:8. Though we can safely assume that some of the converted hearers from Peter’s first sermon were only visiting Jerusalem and returned to their several homes around the Mediterranean world and taking the message back with them in their several languages, the Bible does not explicitly say so (Acts 2:5-11 and 37-41). We cannot overstate the significance of this occasion and the manner in which it is carried out.

The persecution against the church by Saul of Tarsus and others had the unintended consequence of turning the “regular pew warmer” into gospel missionaries. Acts 8:1-4 explains that although the leadership of the church stayed in Jerusalem, many believers scattered and “preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4). We shouldn’t miss the obvious implication: these persons, most of whom had probably never served in a missionary capacity before, were being prepared to do so, whether they recognized it or not. These believers proved to be faithful disciples who loved and studied God’s word. By God’s grace, their faithfulness manifested in opportunities to spread the gospel at a moment’s notice.

Questions to Consider: How many different ways does the Ethiopian convert show himself a good example for us to follow? What do you see in his character and behavior that is worthy to be imitated? If an angel knew where the Ethiopian was and what he needed, why didn’t the same angel “witness” to him? Why was Philip involved at all? Concerning Isaiah 53, how prepared would you be to proclaim the gospel, given that text of scripture? Are there other passages in the Old Testament that you would be comfortable sharing the gospel from? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

Challenging the Class: If an angel assigned you to speak to a person reading the Bible, would you have anything to say that the Holy Spirit could use to save them? Are you regularly preparing yourself, by prayer and the study of God’s word, to be a missionary for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Evangelism: On Mission Always and Everywhere

Primary Verses: “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks [Stoics], encountered him. And some said, what will this babbler say? He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. Acts 17:16-18 (KJV)

Teaching Text: Acts 17:16-34

Supporting Texts: Romans 1:14-17; Revelation 5:9-10

Dr. Michael Green is an Oxford theologian and Christian apologist. As the author of more than 50 books, he has proven his value to believers across denominations and decades. In his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Green’s analysis helps us to understand our teaching text as an example of the broader approach of nominal, day-to-day believers in the earliest generations of the Christian church. Regarding methods of evangelism, Green writes:

“I argue in the book that neither the strategy nor the tactics of the first Christians were particularly remarkable. What was remarkable was their conviction, their passion and their determination to act as Christ’s embassy to a rebel world, whatever the consequences... First, they did most of their evangelism on what we would call secular ground. You find them in the laundries, at the street corners and in the wine bars talking about Jesus to all who would listen... gathering a small crowd they spoke as warmly, thoughtfully, and challengingly as they could... They did not accommodate the gospel to the culture of the day. They did however move the good news out of its original Jewish dress and put Gentile clothes on it without compromising its content.”

(Introduction, pp. 19 and 23)

The mission-mindedness of the Church was seen in this: their goals did not coincide with evangelism, but evangelism shaped and gave birth to their goals. We see this both in Paul’s determination and desire to open his mouth for Christ’s sake when his heart was burdened by the idolatry and ignorance of those who surrounded him. One wonders what effect a church full of members, with such a focus, could have on society. It may be that today, such a church would be spoken of like the church in Acts was described, “these men have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). More like right-side up!

Questions to Consider: When you are among persons whose beliefs run contrary to scripture, are you more likely to be deadened to their disposition or distressed? How often are you moved to speak on behalf of Jesus specifically as opposed to making more broad statements concerning “goodness” and “living right?” Verse 18 says that Paul was presenting the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. What makes Jesus’ resurrection “good news?” How would you describe Paul’s evangelistic use of “the Unknown God?” How prepared are you to discuss the resurrection specifically? Verse 30 explains that repentance is a command. Given that idolatry is in view and there’s only one viable option to it - faith in Christ, would you say that the gospel message entails not only an invitation, but an obligation? Why or why not?

Challenging the Class: Rather than merely inviting a person to church in the hopes that they meet Christ, prayerfully prepare yourself to present Christ to them in addition to inviting them to church!