

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Evangelism

Acts 8:25–39



LET'S BEGIN HERE

On your list of desired activities, does sharing your faith rank right up there with getting a root canal? Don't feel alone. It seems that most Christians would rather do anything than witness. Why? First, we don't really know how to go about it. Second, we're indifferent; we have other things to think about, and besides, plenty of evangelists out there can do the job better than we could. Third, we're afraid. Nobody likes to look like a fool because he or she can't answer all of the questions others may have. And what if the response is hostile? The thought of sharing our faith often leaves us intimidated.

We've probably all been in situations—maybe on a plane or at a convention—when the topic of religion came up and we had to face the inevitable dialogue with a nonbeliever. We've usually ended up feeling awkward and uncomfortable, and we've walked away wondering, *What could I have said or done not only to win a hearing but to keep a hearing? How could I have shown Christ to that person in a more understandable way? How could I have kept from sounding so pious or so out of touch with reality?*

Good questions. Acts 8 has some answers for the apprehensive evangelist.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Philip's Background: From Persecution to Proclamation

In the first century, the seeds of the gospel were scattered by the winds of persecution. With Saul of Tarsus looking on, religious leaders stoned Stephen after his compelling and convicting sermon (Acts 7:52–60). Those stones sent ripples of persecution through Jerusalem, driving believers out to all of Judea and Samaria (8:1). But persecution didn't dampen their spirits—it emboldened them to share their faith. And one of those scattered evangelists was a man named Philip.



Quotable

“Don't just pretend to love each other; really love people.”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Philip's Person-to-Person Experience (Acts 8:25–39)

Through Philip, God had stirred up a revival in Samaria (Acts 8:5–13). When the apostles heard that he was up to his ears in new believers, they dispatched Peter and John to help him (8:14–25). Their ministry blossomed, and people started to grow in the love of God. But instead of leaving Philip in this flourishing ministry, God uprooted Philip and sent him on a mission on a desert road. We can learn six principles from Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch.

1. **Sensitivity:** When the angel of the Lord told Philip to take a trip to a desert road, Philip not only heard the message, he also obeyed immediately (8:26–27).
2. **Availability:** Availability focuses on our actions, going wherever God leads. God led Philip to a royal official poring over the prophet Isaiah's words (8:27–29).
3. **Initiative:** When Philip heard the Ethiopian official reading from Isaiah 53, he took the initiative to ask an insightful question and spark a spiritual conversation (8:30).
4. **Tactfulness:** Philip treated the Ethiopian eunuch with respect, courtesy, and dignity. He lovingly led the eunuch through the words of Isaiah to Christ Himself (8:31–34).
5. **Precision:** Starting with the eunuch's frame of reference, Isaiah 53, Philip shared the gospel and kept the conversation focused on Christ (8:35).
6. **Decisiveness:** After trusting the Spirit to work in the eunuch's heart, Philip helped him understand that following Christ involves making a clear decision (8:36–38).



A CLOSER LOOK

Are You Available?

Many believers struggle with the task Jesus gave to His followers right before He ascended into heaven—to tell others the truth about who He is and what He has done for us (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). As we seek to obey, our tendency is to focus on ourselves—especially on our fears or expectations regarding what might happen. God has called us to step outside of our comfort zones and to see the world from someone else's perspective. We need to make ourselves available for the opportunities that arise. Our availability begins with a sensitivity to God's leading in our lives. Like Philip, we must be willing to go where God leads (Acts 8:27). Jesus constantly made Himself available to others in His ministry. He was also aware of the needs of those around Him. Likewise, we should be attentive to the needs of people around us—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Will we follow His example?



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LET'S LIVE IT

Many evangelism-shy Christians just want to be silent partners, winning the world to Christ by living godly lives and keeping their mouths shut. While living a godly life forms the foundation for sharing the gospel with others, we must still share the message of Christ with our words.

God has placed you where He has placed no one else. No one in the world has the same network of relationships that you have. God hasn't put you in those places merely to model the truth. Listen for the voice of the Spirit to whisper in your ear, and follow Him wherever He leads.

If someone were to ask you to show him or her what the Bible says about salvation, could you do it? Take some time to write out a gospel presentation using some of these passages: Genesis 3:9–11; Isaiah 53; John 3:1–17; Acts 4:8–12; Romans 5:6–21; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; Galatians 2:16; and Ephesians 2:1–10. (You can also write out your personal testimony and incorporate some of these verses.)



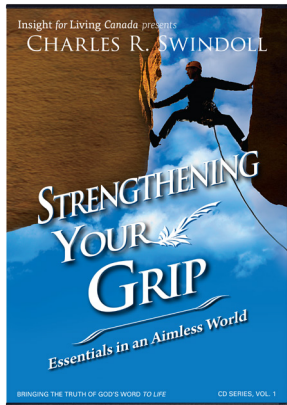
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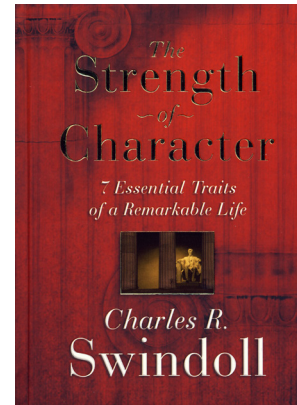
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