

# connections

## THIS WEEK'S PONDERING

APRIL 29, 2021



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*“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I” he said, unless someone explains it to me.”*

Acts 8:30-31

Have you ever had something you wanted to discuss with someone and did not know how to bring up the subject? Instead, you wait for “an opening” or a natural segue – an “As long as you brought up the subject” moment? As an introvert, this happens to me all the time. I can’t tell you the number of times I have left a room thinking to myself “*Why didn’t I ask/mention?*” or fumble an answer when later someone said to me “*Did you ask so and so about...?*”

It is said religion and politics - with money being a close third - are topics thought taboo to talk about in “polite” company, and given the polarities they can cause, you can understand why. Sometimes we just don’t feel we have the time to delve. Sometimes we want to avoid the embarrassment or the stress of an argument. And sometimes we’re just afraid to bring something up for fear of changing the mood of the room. I get it. Philip the Apostle of Jesus was the beneficiary of “an arranged conversation.” He’d been sent to a region south of Jerusalem by the Holy Spirit without any specific mention of why or what to expect once he arrived. But when he did, he “noticed an Ethiopian official seated in his chariot by the side of the road.” We’re then told Philip was prompted by the Holy Spirit “to stay near it” – nothing more.

But since he was “hanging around” he heard the official reading from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, and so Philip had his moment – a “Say, whatcha reading there?” moment, (“*do you understand what you are reading?*”) The official says he can’t understand without help. Voila ... a witnessing moment of the sort I have rarely encountered ... a “this is my lucky day” moment to say the least. Philip was invited into a faith conversation - just like that. Can’t get it set up any better.

It's not always that way – but then again, they probably occur more than we realize. The question is whether we'll be ready and willing to pursue such an invitation. I asked some questions of the congregation a few weeks ago in my sermon – along the lines of “what would you say if someone asked you about ...?” questions. I know ... Philip was an Apostle of the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit set this whole thing up by sending him to this man. And, of course, the Holy Spirit was preparing this official for a “conversion conversation”. It's the Book of Acts after all. But in real life a faith conversation does not have to end in shouting or someone getting up and leaving the room or you being removed from someone's “approved senders” list.

It takes humility, an awareness of the Bible's message, prayer to be ready if the moment arises, and some of your time. I'll say more about this in this weekend's message, but the tools God places at Philip's disposal are at ours - the Word chief among them. There is no substitute for knowing what the Bible is about. Sometimes we don't have the answer, but the commitment to engage in a shared search can be just as powerful a witness as a memory verse recited on the spot. I have often told myself, and others, when in doubt, say “*Let me get back to you on that ... or “I haven't given that much thought ... but I will”*”. Buying some time does not mean missing an opportunity. Witnessing by “hanging around” is not foreign to the Bible. God directs these things. Always has and always will.

Because of a cross



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