

By yielded I mean surrendered – a life given over to another, no longer my will but the will of the other is my greatest desire and joy. Yielded to whom? A life surrendered to the leading of the Holy Spirit, no longer depending on self to make it happen.

Where are we headed?

[Sharing Toys, OR Physical Therapy – picture of yielding that in the end will be good for you – just turned 30 – the physical therapist may stretch you in ways you never thought you could go, push you to do things never thought you would do]

This morning we will see that **the yielded life is only possible through the yielded life of Another, through looking to Him by faith, and following the lead of his Spirit.**

To do so, we will answer three questions from the story of Philip and the Ethiopian: What does the yielded life look like? How do I live a yielded life? And what are the results of the yielded life?

But before we do, we need to set the stage by getting our bearings in Acts. You can see the book of Acts through the theme of “witness” – Jesus’ followers telling of what they have seen and heard of Jesus. In Acts 1:8, Jesus sends his followers out with an astounding promise: *“But 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.”*

The rest of Acts shows this witness spreading out and out towards the end of the earth by the power of the Spirit. This hasn’t stopped – still going out today. And in our passage, Philip, one of seven chosen to care for the poor and widows, is also exercising his evangelism muscles. In many ways, our story today is a model for personal evangelism. And a breathtaking picture of the yielded life.

I. What Does The Yielded Life Look Like?

In our passage we see at least two characteristics of the yielded life:

A. Takes You to Unlikely Places (26-27a)

In verse 26, Philip gets some strange and surprising directions.¹ [Read v. 26] This is surprising for several reasons. For one, it didn't make sense. Earlier in chapter 8, Philip shared with an entire city in Samaria. Surely there was much to do and people to disciple there, but he is called away from the busy, away from where he may feel needed. **Where God calls us to be his witnesses may not make sense.**

The directions are also surprising because of where they lead him, a lonely road in the middle of the desert. The "road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" was a path that went along the Mediterranean coast south towards the African continent.² Philip was not told why he was going there, just to go.

[This reminds me of an early morning encounter I had with a neighbor a few weeks ago. I had barely enough time to make it to an early meeting, and as I walked out of our apartment, a neighbor was walking in – works night shift – was in a talking mood. He told me all about his black motorcycle and how if he wears his black suit, he looks like a ninja riding down the road. I was feeling growing pressure to end the conversation (I would be late), but I also felt an unexplainable urge to stay. Before we parted he said, "Do you ever play steel darts? You should come play sometime!" I never expected to learn about his ninja motorcycle or be invited over to play darts – but I also know the Holy Spirit timed my leaving so that I would run into him. He and I are actually supposed to play darts tomorrow so please pray – this is an unlikely place.]

But in order to go to these unlikely places, we also need ears to hear. The Holy Spirit usually doesn't shout – often a gentle urging.

¹ Witherington, p. 294.

² Stott, p. 159-160.

B. (The Yielded Life) Requires Spiritual Sensitivity

Philip models this sensitivity well – Read v. 29-30a

The Spirit told him to go and he RAN. He sensed the Spirit leading and responded in instant obedience.

How do we sense the leading of the Spirit? Is it kind of like Star Wars – using the “force,” where you just need to quiet yourself and empty your mind and trust your instincts? If I trusted my instincts in talking with my neighbor, I would have pretended like I didn’t see him and driven off.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal energy force, but a personal, powerful Person – God himself – eternal and infinite. And being God, he desires intimate, daily communion with us.

We will only grow in sensitivity to the Spirit as we grow in intimacy with him. And the ways we grow in intimacy are simple – fellowship with him in his word, habitual and spontaneous prayer, meditating on the word, up-building time with other believers – these provide channels for God to speak to us by his Spirit and lead us moment-by-moment.

[One application is that we are not called to stop and share Jesus with *every* person we see – talk to the car wash attendant and get drenched. But we’re called to pray and ask God, “please give me opportunities today to witness of your grace to others,” and then to be watchful and willing to obey his leading when he brings them.]

[So I thought about ending the sermon right there, but then I realized, there’s a big problem. **I don’t want to yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit.** I don’t want to pray for opportunities or go to unlikely places – I want to stay where it’s safe and predictable.

Danielle and I have been praying for opportunities for witness in our apartment complex, and God is giving us some, and *it's scary*.

This resistant heart is ultimately traced back to Isaiah 53:6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way.” “My way or the highway,” “I did it my way,” “BK slogans – Have it your way – be your way – feel your way.”³ When the culture and my own flesh screams “Have it Your Way!” how do we live the yielded life?]

II. How Do I Live A Yielded Life?

The answer to this question is actually found in Philip’s interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch.

[Read v. 30-32a]

The secret to living a yielded life (not so secret) lies in the text the Ethiopian is reading, from Isaiah 53:7-8.

[Read text]

It is a picture of voluntary acceptance – of a man willingly yielding himself to Another’s will, even when it has deadly consequences.

It’s a picture of a sheep being led along to the place where it will be killed, and of a lamb being led to get its wool sheared off – by its silence, the lamb is saying, “Do with me as you wish.”

We know that this is not just describing any man – this is about Jesus.

What does this text tell us about Jesus?

- 1) He was silent as he was led to be slaughtered. But there is a difference between Jesus and a sheep. A sheep does not know when it is being led to slaughter – may be thinking, “Yes, new grass!” Jesus knew exactly where he was going. On a dark night in a garden, a

³ Google search, “Burger King slogans”

band of soldiers and religious men with lanterns and torches and swords approached Jesus, Judas at their head. John 18:4 says, “Then Jesus, *knowing all that would happen to him*, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’”⁴

Jesus knew “all that would happen to him” and yet willingly yielded himself to such an end. He could have spoken up for himself, but instead, he “opened not his mouth.”

Not only that, but Isaiah’s question, “who can understand his generation?” hints that no one really understood what he was doing. No one cared that he was yielding himself to such horrors. The King of the universe letting himself be led along to a common criminal’s execution.

The Ethiopian is captivated by this man who willingly yielded himself to death. He can’t seem to get past this, and so he asks (v. 34) “Who is Isaiah talking about?”

(v. 35) “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.”

[Pastor Frank Barker tells a story from his days in the Naval Air Corps. His assignment was to fly alongside the Blue Angels during their stunts and film them. One night, he flew back to his base in bad weather. After making a successful but difficult landing, the Tower radioed and asked, “Do you want the ‘Follow Me’ truck?” – small truck that would lead you in to park. He thought “No way, I’ve just been flying with the Blue Angels – I can park myself.” As he taxied along, suddenly he got the urge to look ahead – saw “a glowing cross shining through the fog.” Crossed wands – emergency stop. Then he looked up and saw ten yards ahead a parked plane. If hadn’t stopped, would’ve blown himself and both

⁴ Emphasis added.

planes up. What struck him was the man with the wands – would have been blown up too – had yielded his life for a man who stubbornly would not yield control, and in doing so, saved him from destruction.]

Jesus did what we could never do. He yielded perfectly and wholly to the Spirit from the womb to the tomb, and is now raised to life so that we who look to him by faith can have this same Spirit dwelling within us, leading us.

Only this fully Yielded Life could break my unyielding heart of stone and make it a living, yielding heart of flesh. Because Jesus yielded to the Spirit's leading, now so can we.

III. What Are The Results of a Yielded Life?

As we grow in yielding to the lead of the Spirit, there are two results:

A. God will work through us

Look at what God did through Philip's yielded life [v. 36] - follows Spirit to a eunuch on a chariot in a desert who hears about Jesus and instantly believes and is baptized!⁵

But consider this Ethiopian eunuch also. We are told that he "went on his way," most likely continuing on to Ethiopia, which is modern day Sudan. According to Irenaeus, an early church father and writer, this eunuch returned to his homeland to preach the good news he had received. This one man was responsible for the conversion of a whole nation.⁶ The Coptic church is said to have come from this.⁷

⁵ Verse 37 is not in the earliest manuscripts and was likely added later to emphasize the need for true heart belief before being baptized (Stott 161-162).

⁶ Matthew Henry Commentary and Stott, p. 162.

⁷ Griffith.

[The Spirit's power released through us – like a toy plane – propeller attached to a rubber band, and you wind the propeller – the more the rubber band yields, the more the plane can display the power of its creator]

B. We Will Have Joy

(39) After the Spirit carried Philip to his next assignment, the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.”

Why would he be rejoicing? Philip is gone! But this doesn't seem to bother him, because he is so overjoyed with his new Companion, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to lead him.

Those who yield themselves to the Spirit possess this same joy – true in my life – a few days ago, got my neighbor's number, and even though I have no idea what will happen, we plan to play darts this week. I am definitely on edge but also pumped to have the privilege to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work through such a timid, vessel, who only yields because of the Yielded Life of Jesus.

One takeaway – Brothers and sisters, let us, like Philip, run to the “Ethiopian eunuchs in our lives – friends, family, co-workers, classmates – led by the same Spirit who led Jesus, the perfect Yielded Life.

Wait, there is one thing I didn't tell you about the eunuch – *he's a eunuch*, which means, he wouldn't have physical descendants. But for this eunuch, the promise in Isaiah 56:3-5 is now true:

“ let not the eunuch say,

“Behold, I am a dry tree.”

⁴For thus says the LORD:

“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,

who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
^sI will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.”