

5. Sharing the Gospel with Another Culture, Religion, or Ethnic Group

In our last two topics, we have talked about crossing the barrier of fear and the barrier of learning to make contacts for evangelism. We saw that we learn to cross the barrier of fear by going with another person until we learn to share the Gospel clearly and secondly, by yielding ourselves to God in prayer each time before we share the Gospel so that we will witness in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of in our own strength. We then learned eight principles about learning to make contacts with strangers for the purpose of sharing the gospel from the instructions that Christ gave the twelve before He sent them out.

Today, we would like to focus on the third barrier: Learning to share the Gospel with people of another culture, religion or ethnic group. The book of Acts gives us important principles for learning to cross this barrier. In Acts 8, we learn several principles for cross cultural evangelism. In Acts 8:4, we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Since verse one tells us that the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, we see that those who are preaching the Word in other places at this point were not the apostles. That helps us because we know that the apostles had been shown how to witness in Samaria by Christ (John 4) so they already had some experience and background. As a result, we will see, in Acts 8 and 11, that the Christians who are preaching the Word are not those who had the experience of being with Christ. Instead, they are Christians like you and me.

In Acts 8:26, and following, we learn some principles from Philip about how to make contacts and share the Gospel across cultures:

- Philip was obedient to the Lord - Acts 8:26-27 (he went where the Lord led him)
- Philip was looking for possible contacts - Acts 8:27-28 (he saw a man traveling through the desert)
- Philip asked the Holy Spirit to lead him - Acts 8:29 (he was sensitive to the leading of the Spirit)
- Philip obeyed the Holy Spirit immediately - Acts 8:30a (he ran to the man)
- Philip began by asking a question - Acts 8:30b (he saw a searching man and knew he needed understanding)
- Philip made himself available to help - Acts 8:31 (Philip was ready to sit with him and help him to understand - we may have to sit with some people and explain many times before they will fully understand)
- Philip saw that the Holy Spirit had already prepared the man - Acts 8:32-34 (when we ask the Holy Spirit to lead us, He will lead us to people who are seeking to know more about God)
- Philip explained what the man could not understand - Acts 8:35 (people who are searching for God are missing the key, the fact that they must come to God through Christ and His payment on the cross for their sin)
- Philip made certain that he understood the Gospel clearly before baptizing him - Acts 8:36-38 (we can make certain that a person understands the Gospel clearly, whether he is ready to accept Christ at that moment or not, so that he will know how to repent and place his trust in Christ if the Holy Spirit convicts him)

In Acts 8:5, and following, we learn some principles about how Philip shared the Gospel with the

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Samaritans:

- Philip went to their city rather than expecting them to come to him - Acts 8:5 (people of other cultures will be reached most effectively if we go to them in their homes, places of work or where they feel comfortable)
- Philip preached Christ to them - Acts 8:5 (sometimes we wait far too long to begin sharing Christ)
- Philip recognized their fear of evil spirits - Acts 8:6-8 (those cultures where demon possession is common have a great fear of evil spirits and many long to be set free from the power of those evil spirits)

In Acts 11:19, and following, we meet some of the other Christians who were scattered at the persecution mentioned in Acts 8:1-4. We see how they made contacts cross culturally:

1. Those who were scattered shared with only the Jews at first - Acts 11:19 (they had not yet learned how to cross the barrier of another culture, religion or ethnic group)
2. Those who were scattered abroad were not all Jews from Jerusalem - Acts 11:20 (some of them were Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene who had grown up in another culture - These are Key People because they have learned to function in more than one culture already. In every city, we will find people who have lived among two or more cultures and have at least some understanding of how to bridge the gap to people of other cultures, religions and ethnic groups. This is true both among those who become Christians and also among those we are trying to reach.)
3. Those who had a background of multiple cultures led the way in cross cultural evangelism - Acts 11:20 (those who had lived in cities where the Greek culture was strong knew how to relate to those from Greek backgrounds - many who have been in the military or some similar background have developed a similar understanding of multiple cultures)
4. Those who crossed the cultural and religious barrier shared the Lord Jesus - Acts 11:20 (people of every culture have at least some desire to know how to relate to God)
5. They depended on the Lord to work in the hearts of people - Acts 11:21 (as we yield to the Holy Spirit, we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work in the lives of those with whom we share)
6. The existing church shared in following up those who were new Christians - Acts 8:14, 11:22 (many times those who are comparatively new Christians are limited in how much they are able to help brand new Christians and need the help of others who will cross the bridges they have created to help follow-up the new Christians.
7. Barnabas saw the opportunity to help another Christian expand his ministry to other cultures - Acts 9:26-30, 11:25-26 (we should continually be looking for Christians who find it easy to cross cultures and invite them to work with us among other cultures)

As you meditate on these principles and seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will give you the wisdom to learn to develop an expanded ministry of sharing the Gospel across cultural, religious, and ethnic barriers. May the Lord richly bless you as you follow His leading to expand your

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witness for Him to those of other cultures, religions, and ethnic groups.