

### Getting Metaphysical

Years ago, when I was still in school, I went to the Grand National Horse Show and Rodeo with a young woman from Canada. I had free tickets (my sister was working the horse show) and a car (old and beat up though it was), and the young woman was a rodeo fan (who happened to be a long way from home). It wasn't hard to convince her to go out with me under these circumstances.

On the way, she surprised me with the question, "So, what's important to you?"

I thought for a moment, and warned her, "This is going to get pretty metaphysical." This was kind of a test. If she figured out I meant spiritual things were going to come up, I knew what level of conversation to have; and if she said to go ahead, I could talk about Jesus all I wanted.

"That's ok, go ahead," she said.

"Unbelievable," I thought. I took a deep breath and plunged ahead. My salvation story has both a short version and a long one; we were still an hour from the rodeo, so I went with the long one. The conversation went well, with some back and forth. Then we arrived at the rodeo and had a great time.

That was our one and only time out together. We never again spoke of spiritual things. I don't know if she ever became a believer. I don't know if she ever thought about what I said. I don't know what God did with that conversation. But God knows, and that's all I need to know.

### Monday – Who is this Guy?

1. Please read Acts 8:1-4. What was happening to believers in Jerusalem?
2. Acts 8:5-8 tells of a man who took full advantage of being placed among people who had not yet heard the good news about Jesus. Who is he? Where was he? What did he do?
3. According to verses 6 and 8, what response did Phillip get in Samaria? Why do you think the crowd and city responded that way? Do you think anyone responded differently? Why would they?

**Making it Personal:** Have you ever seen God work? What has been your response? Why?

### Tuesday – Unlikely Companions

1. Read Acts 8:26-30. God told Phillip, who was preaching north of Jerusalem, to leave and travel south. How would you feel if you were told to leave a successful ministry and do something else? Any chance you'd react like Phillip?

**Text insight:** The road, which ran south through the Judean foothills, was paved and suitable for a carriage.

2. Who did Phillip meet up with? Have you ever encountered someone with that kind of earthly authority and power? How did you react? How did they treat you?
3. Phillip knew he had been sent there by God. What thoughts do you think he had when he heard scripture coming from the carriage? What did he do and say? Would you have done and said the same?

### Wednesday – Understand?

1. Phillip acted boldly in Acts 8:29-30. Do you think he considered the possibility of rejection?
2. How did the Ethiopian respond in verse 31? Would you have expected that response if you were the one standing there in place of Phillip?
3. In 1 Peter 3:15, we receive explicit instructions on what to do if asked about our faith. Have you prepared yourself to follow those instructions? Look at the beginning of 1 Peter 3:15 for a major step in preparation. What else can you do to be ready?

**Making it Personal:** Imagine that a high ranking government official, very high ranking, just asked you to explain what it means to be a Christian. While there may be many responses that honor God, what would be one you could pick? Now ask God for the opportunity to use that response with someone you will encounter soon whether an official of high rank or not.

### Thursday – Everything Old is New Again

1. Please read Acts 8:32-35. What had the Ethiopian been reading?
2. We can tell by the words used in Acts that the version the Ethiopian read was from a Greek translation of the Hebrew, which did not follow the original Hebrew text exactly. Read Isaiah 53:4-9 in a modern translation for the verses in some of their context. Who do you think Isaiah is talking about?
3. How did Phillip respond to the Ethiopian's request? What wisdom do you see in "starting from that very passage" and then going into the good news about Jesus?

**Digging Deeper:** Luke, the author of Acts, was obviously well aware of Jesus' role in fulfilling the Old Testament. (See Luke 24:44.) Read Isaiah 53:1-12 paying particular attention to verse 5. How did Jesus fulfill the words of this chapter? What is the importance of Isaiah 53:5 to you?

### Friday – Ready for Anything

1. Apparently, the Ethiopian was ready to go wherever God lead him through the scriptures. According to Acts 8:36-40, where did he end up spiritually? What about Phillip?
2. Acts 8:39-40 tells us that Phillip returned to his ministry in the North. Where did the Ethiopian go?
3. The Ethiopian was from a region in Africa called Cush, south of Egypt. Mediterranean peoples (like Greeks, Romans and Jews) considered Cush to be the southern end of the earth. How does the Ethiopian's conversion fit in with Psalm 68:31-32? How about with Acts 1:8?

**For the Weekend:** Read Acts 8:29-35 and 1 Peter 3:15. Then pray for God to prepare you (like he did Phillip) to tell others about your relationship with Jesus. You never know when God will make a divine appointment for you to meet someone on his behalf.