

CARRY THE FLAME

SERMON OUTLINE 1

God Uses Ordinary People

(Luke 10:1-2)

I. Introduction

Often, we're tempted to sit back and say, "God can't use me. I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm not educated enough. I don't know enough Bible verses." God wants to dispel that thinking. God isn't looking for ability among his people, he's looking for availability. He wants us to step out in faith and do what he's calling us to do. He wants us to carry the flame of his love into people's lives.

What is the flame? The flame is the light of the gospel that shines into people's lives and the darkness. You think you're too inexperienced or not "qualified" enough to be used by God . . . think again. God has called every believer to serve him. He sent his Holy Spirit to empower you to do whatever assignment he has given you. With God, nothing is impossible.

God used ordinary people in extraordinary ways to carry the flame of the gospel. Each person was different. Each person was called to serve the Lord in unique ways. But every one of them was available to God. They simply wanted to be at his disposal. The same is true today.

II. Teaching

God is still looking for people who are open to hearing from him and willing to obey. One day, as Jesus went about ministering, he called seventy people to assist him.

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Most of us are aware of the twelve famous apostles, Matthew and James and John and the others. But who are these seventy other people that he sent out? What was their role in the ministry of Jesus Christ? They are never mentioned by name in the Bible.

A. God's Call to the Seventy

What do we know about the seventy? They were followers of Christ. That's all. How much background could they have? How much of the New Testament did they know? The New Testament hadn't even been written. All they had was the verbal teaching of Jesus Christ: "I'm the Savior of the world. I'm the light of the world." That's all they had.

Without being named, they played a very important role in the ministry of Christ while he was on earth. Why don't we know their names? Because the Lord wants us to know that he can use anonymous people, people who are not famous, people whose names are not in lights and people who have never been filled with a lot of religious education. They're just available. They were early disciples of Jesus Christ. And as he sent them out, he talked to them about their role, which was to go ahead of him preceding him, paving the way for him. Isn't that a beautiful picture of how God wants to use you and me?

The seventy were called to go to the fields ripe for harvest. Jesus told them they must go because the laborers are few. There are very few laborers. Isn't that amazing? God has all power. Jesus was the Son of God and yet he needed the cooperation of seventy people whose names we don't even know. This is a very important truth found in the Bible that is often overlooked. We know that God is sovereign. We know that God is omnipotent. He has all power. And yet in his wisdom, in his plan for planet earth, he has said, "My message, my love, my compassion has to be conveyed by people who work with me." The Apostle Paul tells us that we are co-laborers with Christ. He of course is doing the saving. He's the one who died on the cross. And yet God has chosen not to use angels speaking from heaven.

Without Jesus Christ, people's lives are empty and that's what we must remember. Jesus was sending them out into a harvest field of people who needed to know about Jesus Christ.

These seventy were available to him when he sent them out. We know that they went and obeyed. Just think the same Jesus that sent out Matthew and Thomas and Philip and James and John sent out seventy nobodies, non-entities. They were just common people who loved him and believed in him. He sent them out just like he wants to send you out. Every single believer in Christ has a work assignment. He gave them their work assignment, which was to go to every town he was planning to go to and prepare the way for him. And they were available. They had the simple faith that said, "I'll do it." Is that what you want? Jesus?

B. God's Call to Us

Remember, it's not ability that God is looking for, it is availability that he's looking for. He's looking for people to harvest his fields. He's looking for us.

That means you must but be available 24/7 to the Lord Jesus Christ—available to pave the way for him, go before him into people's lives, tell them about him, talk about the salvation he offers, love them in Christ's name, manifest through our lives the kind of love and compassion that Jesus has for them as he sent them out. Jesus said an amazing thing, which probably perfects them. In Matthew 9:37 he said, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few." What fields was Jesus talking about? He wasn't talking about grass and trees and crops. He was talking about people. That's very important for us.

If we're going to carry the flame, the flame of the gospel, the flame of God's light into a very dark world, we must pray that we begin to see the world the way Jesus sees the world. More than that, we need to pray and ask God for understanding of how he feels about that world. See, there was urgency in this to Jesus. He said, "Look at the fields. These people are perishing. They don't know about me." The world filled with people of all races and backgrounds, all ages, rich people and poor people, Latinos, Anglos people from every background speaking every kind of language. They are a field. They are a harvest that needs to be reaped.

How many times do we sit back and say, "No, God can't use me. I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm not educated enough. I don't know enough Bible verses." The Lord wants to dispel that in your life and in your mind. Everyone who is a follower of Christ can be used. The Lord can use his children. He can use the newest believer. He can use a person around the world who dropped out of school in the third grade. In all the lands of this earth, God is using people that you and I would say "Impossible," but it is possible because if we're available to God, he uses us.

What might happen if I go? Would I open my mouth? What if I don't know what to say? What if someone asks me a question or refutes what I'm saying? What do I do? Have faith that if Jesus sends you, he will equip you. If Jesus calls us to do anything, he's going to equip us to do it. He's the one who died on the cross and gave his life for us. Do you think he would ever send us on a mission, whether it's calling someone on the phone, visiting someone in a hospital, going to a homeless shelter to share the good news, talking to a relative who doesn't know Christ and then let us flop and fall on our faces? That's impossible, totally impossible.

He will be faithful to help us. Just like he helped those seventy people sent out in Luke 10. They were people just like you and me, ready to do what the Lord commanded. Still today the flame must be carried. The light of the gospel must be carried and we are the ones God has called to do it.

III. Application

We love the Lord. We've put our faith in Jesus, but he's calling us to do something more than sit in church on Sunday. Do you think that the Lord Jesus Christ would send us on a mission of failure? Never. In fact, he promised, "Don't worry about what you're going to say. Don't even give a thought about it. When you open your mouth, I will fill you with the words that you need to say."

My Father will give you the message. You'll be able to react and respond because his grace will be working in you. The problem is that we're not willing to obey. We've bought into this American concept of church folks on the platform. We pay them and they do all the work. We sit and we just come to church when it's comfortable, when it's not raining, when it's not too sunny. And that's sad. That's why the church is suffering. How could you know Jesus Christ? How could you be born again and hardly get to church?

Jesus Christ hung on a cross for six hours—from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon. He suffered for us. He shed his blood so we could be saved. Did he do that so that you would just go to church on Sunday? Does that sound reasonable to you? We're going to spend eternity with Jesus. Everything you own will be gone in a millisecond. All the money you earn, all your CDs and investments, the house, the car in a millisecond will be gone. And then we're going to stand before the Lord of the harvest, and we'll have to give an account of what we did with this salvation that he gave us. Did we share it? Did we serve him, or did we want him to serve us like a MasterCard in the sky? No. Let's give ourselves to the Lord Jesus. Let's consecrate ourselves. Starting with me as I'm telling this to you, I feel myself saying in my heart, I want to be available.

He's not asking you to do anything. He doesn't want your resources. He has the resources. But you and I must be available and have the simple faith to step out like those seventy other disciples did. They just went and did what he told them. The miracle happens. The blessing comes when you do what he told you. We want to see it guaranteed and we want to see something happen while we're watching television. No, it's when we go, when we share, when we sacrifice that we see amazing things happen. Be blessed and go today!

CARRY THE FLAME

SERMON OUTLINE 2

Power from Heaven

(Acts 1:4-5, 8)

I. Introduction

We are called to carry the flame—the flame of the Holy Spirit, the flame of God's light and love. That's the calling on all of us. Every part of the body of Christ is to carry the flame.

Where did the flame come from? How did this all begin? Let's say it another way. How did the church begin? We're not in Old Testament Israel. We're in the New Testament era. God's people are called the Church of Jesus and we are made up of Jew and Gentile, every color, every background. We are the church and we're the only holy nation that God has in this universe. How did it all begin? How was it birthed?

II. Teaching

Following the resurrection, Jesus appeared off and on to the disciples.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:4–5

In Acts, we read about a meal Jesus attended with the disciples. They gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" They had a prophecy question and he said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8)

A. The Promise of the Holy Spirit

When Christ was about to leave the earth, he basically said, “Don’t go out and tell people I’m alive. Instead, wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come on you.” The world was lying in darkness, in need of the gospel, and Jesus said, “I want you to be my witnesses, but you can’t do it effectively until you receive power from on high. The Holy Spirit will give you power, and then you will be my witnesses.”

When Jesus returned to heaven, he would pour out his Holy Spirit on the church, and all God’s people would then go throughout the world in the Spirit’s power to take the gospel to everyone. This was the last thing Jesus said. What happened?

B. The Arrival of the Holy Spirit

Jesus ascended and the apostles went to Jerusalem. The Bible tells us that they gathered in an upper room, to wait for the fulfillment of the promise that he had made. They went into a prayer meeting. Interesting. The Christian Church was born in a prayer meeting, not someone preaching or teaching, waiting for the Holy Spirit to come in a new fresh way.

Well, who was in that upper room? The twelve apostles obviously. Acts 1:14 tells us that it was 120 people who were gathered there—men and women, including Mary and her children born after Jesus.

After about ten days, the promise was fulfilled: “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. . . . All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:2, 4).

Something came from heaven. We find it again at the end of Acts 4, where they all prayed together. We find occurrences in the New Testament where it says, Peter stood up full of the Holy Spirit. Something came from heaven. The church of Jesus Christ can only be built by the supernatural power, the flame of the Holy Spirit being carried and dwelling among his people.

C. The Holy Spirit Today

What happens when Christians and Christian churches get sick and tired of being sick and tired and seeing no fruit and no power available for them to serve Christ effectively? They go back to the beginning. They wait and say, “God send the Holy Spirit in a fresh new way.”

These are the times of the great awakening:

- The Welsh revival

- Local revivals in churches
- Revivals in individual Christians' lives

When people are tired of being lukewarm, dominated by the flesh, and controlled by the world's standard of living, they want something to make them fervent and on fire for the Lord. And that's called *revival*, reviving the work of God, stirring up the gift of the Holy Spirit. To carry the flame, you must have the flame.

So what happened? They went out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Who went out? It wasn't just the apostles who went out, but that early church. The Bible tells us that with the gifting that they received, they went out and did the work of the Lord.

Those of us who make up the church today need the same empowering that the believers in the early church received—the Holy Spirit.

We need the continued filling of the Holy Spirit to be bold witnesses for Jesus Christ. It requires an ongoing experience with and continual prayer to the Lord, so we can be renewed in our power and might to represent him.

III. Application

God had a work assignment for all 120 and he has a work assignment for you, but we must be available. The Bible tells us they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they carried that flame. They were available to do the work of the Lord?

What is the work of the Lord? The Bible encourages us to honor those who give themselves to the work of the Lord. It's mentioned several times. First Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

That wasn't written to the leaders. That wasn't written to the deacon board or the elders of the church. It was written to the whole church. Paul's telling all the believers to do the work of the Lord. We all have a part to play. This is not up to a few. It's up to all of us. So, what's the work of the Lord? It's spreading the gospel so people can hear and believe. Once they believe they need to be nurtured, prayed for, and encouraged.

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Colossi. He had never been there, but he must have heard about a member of the church. Not a leader, just a guy in the church. Paul writes about many things. Then at the end of the letter in Colossians 4:17 he says, "Tell Archippus: 'See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.'"

Do what God called you to do. It doesn't matter what people say or who appreciates it? Are you working for people? Are you doing it for the Lord? Don't you want to hear at the end of the day, the Lord say to you, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

CARRY THE FLAME

SERMON OUTLINE 3

The Gift of Encouragement

(Acts 4:34-37)

I. Introduction

Everyday, average believers can be mightily used by God to extend the kingdom of Christ. We need to be used. It's a necessity. The idea that the clergy, the organized, educated clergy, are going to do all of what's called in the Bible: "the work of the Lord" is impossible. Too many folks out there need to hear about Christ. The work cannot be left to a few people who have a degree and a title in the church. The church was born when the Holy Spirit came upon 120 believers. It was not just the twelve apostles. There were 120 unnamed men and women. Why would God pour out a spirit to people who weren't going to be famous apostles? Because we all need the spirit to carry out our work assignment.

II. Teaching

In every person or church that is being led by the Holy Spirit, we will always find two qualities: (1) compassion for those in need, and (2) a willingness to give sacrificially to help meet the need.

When the first believers of the early church went out carrying the flame, it led to thousands placing their trust in Jesus as their Savior. As the church grew, an interesting practice developed: "those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need" (Acts 4:34–35).

A. Barnabas: Son of Encouragement

In Acts 4 we meet a particular believer who was generous with his resources and fulfilled a unique calling: encouraging other Christians. As we read, “Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet” (verses 36–37). This man, Barnabas, was so filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of Christ that he couldn’t seem to keep from helping other believers and lifting them up in the Lord. And it was distributed to anyone who had need.

He was a simple believer who saw need, had a field, sold it, brought the money, laid it at the leadership's feet and said, “Do as you see fit.” A simple word or act of encouragement can touch someone’s heart deeply. So, if you’re not sure how to carry the flame, a place to start is to do what Barnabas did: notice a need and do something about it.

Barnabas always encouraged people. He had the gift of encouragement. He was always lifting people up.

We need that today in the Christian church with all the discouragement, all the negativity, all the nastiness, all the attacks on social media. Today there are tons of people just needing a word of encouragement, a prayer of encouragement. Romans 7:12 tells us that if the gift is serving, then let them serve. If it's teaching, then teach.

And then out of serving and teaching comes this: encouraging others. A believer full of the Holy Spirit carrying the flame of God's love encourages people. Barnabas was an encourager. Unfortunately, I know many people who have the gift of discouragement.

B. Becoming an Encourager

The word *encouragement* in Acts 4:36 comes from the same root word used to describe the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16). The Spirit of Jesus is an encourager! He comes alongside us to lift us up. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, then his love and concern for others will naturally flow out from our lives.

We have a choice. Even when we are in the hardest circumstances, we can wait on God and ask him for a fresh filling of his Spirit, and he will encourage us so that we can encourage someone else. That’s what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 1:4 when he says that God “comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” Any believer who is carrying the flame of God’s love will naturally want to encourage other people.

Encouragement is powerful. It’s so powerful, in fact, that it can change the course of a person’s life—both our lives and the lives of others. We saw earlier how Barnabas sold his field to help other believers. But he also helped the apostle Paul get started in his ministry.

The first time Paul went to Jerusalem after being saved, he tried to join the disciples, but they

were afraid of him because of his violent past toward the church. But Barnabas stepped in and brought Paul to the apostles. He explained that Paul had met the risen Christ and had “preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:27). This opened the door for Paul to move freely in Jerusalem and preach the gospel.

Barnabas hadn’t set out to be noticed—he just wanted to be available to the Lord. But when God sees a heart like the one that Barnabas had, he raises that person to greater responsibility. So it was that when God called Paul to set out on his first missionary journey, he also called Barnabas to go with him.

What little it takes to be an encourager . . . but what a profound impact it can make on a life.

We don’t learn to encourage people by going to Bible school, being ordained, or becoming a pastor. We learn by knowing Jesus. He will teach us to care for our brothers and sisters who are part of the body of Christ. That’s who we will spend eternity with. That’s the family of God. We’ve been put in that family.

We are called to carry the flame and to share Jesus with a lost, hurting, and dying world. Who better to encourage them and bring them to Jesus than those of us who know Jesus and have been encouraged in our difficulties by him?

The flame needs to spread and burn so that we become liberal, even sacrificial givers to people who are in need. Think of the people who need something that you have. You’ve gone through an experience. God brought you through it. Aren’t you going to give back and share that experience? Share God’s faithfulness. Tell people, “I was down and out, but he lifted me up.” How else will they know to believe and be encouraged to put their trust in the Lord?

Oh, what a ministry it is to be called alongside of someone to help them when they’re just about ready to quit and give it up. And then somebody brings a word of encouragement, a much-needed ministry, and you and I can do it.

III. Application

Come on, you can do this. All you must do is be filled with love and say, “God, give me understanding of where and what people are going through.” You can carry the flame. You can be an encouragement to people.

God is looking for people who are available to the Holy Spirit and faithful in any little thing he asks them to do. So, when he sees you doing the little things that you can do to lift up someone else, he will notice and call you to greater responsibility.

Maybe you want to be a pastor or a missionary or a ministry leader. Those are good desires. But start out by praying, “Lord, make me an encouragement to somebody today.” Right now, today, make yourself available to God—not to cross the seas and be a famous missionary—but to speak a word of encouragement right where you live. Who knows the lives and the destinies that will be

changed because of it?

CARRY THE FLAME

SERMON OUTLINE 4

Keep on Being Filled

(Ephesians 5:15-19)

I. Introduction

Ordinary believers in the New Testament were filled with the flame of the Holy Spirit and did extraordinary things for God. The seventy followers of Jesus made themselves available to him and paved the way for the spread of the gospel (see Luke 10:1–24). The 120 believers waited in an upper room and prayed, and the Holy Spirit fell on them (see Acts 1:12–15; 2:4).

When we carry the flame, we are carrying within us the Holy Spirit, who touches others through us with his light and love and truth. What does it mean to carry the flame and be filled with the Spirit?

Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit about? In many churches he's hardly ever recognized or talked about. Jesus, before he left planet earth and even before he was crucified, told the disciples, "It's good for you that I go, because unless I go, I cannot send the Holy Spirit. He won't be able to come to you. I have been with you, but he will be in you."

II. Teaching

The Lord promised the Holy Spirit's ministry. He told his followers that the Holy Spirit working from the innermost being of our person would bring power and illumination and do things he (Jesus) could not accomplish in his physical body. When Jesus left, he put the entire work of God, the church of Jesus Christ, under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. When he was on earth, he was in charge. Now, they needed to look to the Spirit, who would guide them "into all the truth" (John

16:13). When he had ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit would lead them, guide them, and give them instructions. That is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today. He will guide you into all truth.

A. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We need the Holy Spirit inside us to help us not just know the Word but also understand it, receive it, and live it out. Jesus' words were proven true when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the 120 believers gathered in the upper room, who then became powerful witnesses for Christ.

The apostles Peter, James, and John were doing things they never did when Jesus was on earth. What was the difference? It was because they had not been filled with the Holy Spirit. They had lacked that power of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit is often neglected in the church today. Why is this? One explanation is that some churches fear that talking about the Holy Spirit could lead to an out-of-balance focus on him . . . which in turn could lead to fanaticism and behavior that contradicts Scripture. So in an attempt to honor the Word of God, they refrain from even discussing the Holy Spirit. But in the process, they also avoid emphasizing the importance of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. They focus on Bible study and may talk about the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace—but they avoid certain expressions of the Spirit's power.

We should be Bible filled, but we should also be Spirit filled. After all, it's the Holy Spirit who makes the Word of God come alive to our hearts. Without his illuminating power within us, the Word will only touch our minds.

B. The Filling of the Holy Spirit

While every believer in Christ has received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not every believer has received the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Romans 8:9

Some Christians believe that when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, it was just a one-time event. But even people who were filled with the Holy Spirit on that day were filled again. Peter, for example, was filled a second time when he was challenged by the religious leaders and spoke boldly to them in the name of Jesus (see Acts 4:8). We need to be filled with the Spirit again and again.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the

Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:15–19

As the church grew, the members shared their food with each other (see Acts 4:32–37). This worked well . . . until the Greek Jews began to complain against the Hebrew Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily food distribution.

So, the apostles gathered everyone together and said, “Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them” (Acts 6:3). Even to hand out food, the church needed people who were full of the Holy Spirit. All the apostles’ acts were the acts of the Holy Spirit working through them.

This was true for the rank-and-file believers as well. The 120 believers in Acts 2 had no special power; they just prayed and waited on God. Barnabas had no great strength; he just sold a field and encouraged others. The common denominator is that they were filled with the Spirit.

The church will never grow as it should without men and women who are full of the Spirit of Jesus. The early believers didn’t try to be relevant to their culture. They simply spent time with Jesus and were filled continually with his Spirit. Then they went out in his power, and people were saved and discipled. No matter what God asks us to do—loving children, working in an office, helping the poor, evangelizing on the street—we need to be full of the Holy Spirit. We need a fresh supply of the Holy Spirit in our lives each and every day so that we can face the challenges of life not in our own strength but in the power of the Spirit.

III. Application

You have no concept what God can do through your life if that flame touches you. You must be sensitive and yielded to God's will and plan for your life. It is important to know that the Holy Spirit is God, and he can be grieved. The Bible also says the Holy Spirit can be quenched. Think of quenching as pouring water on a fire or a flame. We are called to carry the flame, not extinguish it. We have to ask God to teach us through His word how to walk humbly before the Lord and to avoid the things in our lives that will quench the fire of the Holy Spirit. Some of us even resist the Holy Spirit. This happens when we try to tell God our plans for serving him instead of submitting to him. But we can never fit the Holy Spirit into a box of our own making.

The church will never grow as it should without men and women who are full of the Spirit of Jesus. The early believers didn’t try to be relevant to their culture. They simply spent time with Jesus and were filled continually with his Spirit. Then they went out in his power, and people were saved and discipled. No matter what God asks us to do—loving children, working in an office, helping the poor, evangelizing on the street—we need to be full of the Holy Spirit.

We either yield fully to the Spirit, which brings untold blessing, or we resist him and miss out on

so many things that he has for us.

Are you lacking peace and joy? Could it be that you are grieving, quenching, or resisting the Spirit of God in some way? Let's not hold any part of our lives back from the Lord. Let's give ourselves wholly to him, no matter the cost.

CARRY THE FLAME

SERMON OUTLINE 5

The Holy Spirit Still Speaks

(Acts 8:29-35)

I. Introduction

Sometimes bad situations lead to good results. At least, that is what happened when the early church in Jerusalem suffered persecution at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Despite being forced to flee from their homes, these believers “preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4). The gospel was finally being spread beyond Jerusalem—which had been Jesus’ plan all along (see Acts 1:8).

The early believers were not preaching sermons . . . remember, they didn’t even have the New Testament yet! They were just telling people the basics of the gospel and what Jesus had done to change their lives. They carried the flame, and they proclaimed the name of Jesus.

As we tell people this good news and add our own stories of how Jesus saved us from darkness and brought us into the light, the Holy Spirit can use our simple testimonies to touch people’s hearts.

II. Teaching

We will want to talk about Jesus when we are filled with the Holy Spirit and walking closely with the Lord. This doesn’t mean that we should knock people over with the gospel or push them into spiritual discussions. It just means that if Jesus is on our minds and hearts, we will constantly be listening for his Holy Spirit’s leading as we look for opportunities to share Christ with others.

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” 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?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. . . . Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Acts 8:29–35

A. Philip in Samaria

Philip was one of the seven men chosen to be a deacon in Acts 6 and was handing out food to widows. Philip, like Jesus, went to people outside his circle in order to take the gospel to them. As Philip proclaimed the gospel in Samaria, the people “paid close attention to what he said” (Acts 8:6).

In the midst of all this excitement, an angel of the Lord told Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza” (verse 26). There was no further explanation or guidance provided . . . just an instruction to “go to the desert road.”

So Philip goes and something momentous, life-changing, kingdom-changing is about to happen. He's on this road. Why? Because the angel told him to go there. And when you're a servant of the Lord and you're a Christian, you have not only the Savior Jesus Christ, you have the Lord. You know what Lord means? Lord means he runs our lives. He's in charge. He died on the cross. He's earned that right.

As Philip is standing on the road, a chariot approaches.

B. The Ethiopian

God has plans for us beyond anything that we could ever imagine. When an angel of the Lord told Philip to go to a desert road in the region of Gaza, Philip had no idea what God had in mind. But as he obediently walked along that wilderness track, he saw an Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot. That's when the Holy Spirit gave Philip the next step: “Go to that chariot and stay near it” (Acts 8:29). Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the eunuch reading from the Old Testament.

The life of a eunuch—a slave who could never have a family of his own—would have been lonely. Interestingly, the eunuch was reading a passage from Isaiah 53, which speaks of the Messiah being deprived of his life and leaving behind no descendants. Perhaps the grief and injustice the Ethiopian eunuch saw in this prophecy from the Old Testament resonated with his own heart.

Philip approached the man and asked if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch replied, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” (Acts 8:31). Talk about an open door! The eunuch invited Philip to come up into his chariot and then said, “Tell me please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” (verse 35). Beginning there, Philip told

this man about Jesus.

Next, “as they traveled along the road, they came to some water” (verse 36). The eunuch asked to be baptized, and when the two men came up out of the water, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing (see verses 37–39). Whatever had been on his heart before this moment, he was now filled with joy. Tradition tells us that he then took the gospel back to Ethiopia, where it spread among the nation.

We don’t know what others need, but Jesus does.

III. Application

How does the tradition of the church say the gospel got to Ethiopia? By the Holy Spirit telling Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it” (Acts 8:29). Notice in this simple instruction to Philip that the Holy Spirit was not giving him new doctrine or adding to the Scriptures. In fact, anyone who claims to have a word from the Holy Spirit that adds to or contradicts the Bible is in error. What the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip was not new doctrine. It was a word of *guidance*.

Yes, the Holy Spirit speaks to us today. When we talk about being filled with the Spirit, we need balance. We should not be led by our own impressions or emotions into unbiblical persuasions, but neither should we be so afraid of error that we miss the Spirit’s genuine leading—to reach out to someone, write a letter, ask forgiveness, help a stranger.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, not just doctrinally, but also in your heart? Are you completely yielded to his leading in your life? Open your heart to him—and he will use you to draw people to Jesus.

Picture the Holy Spirit being poured out on the 120 believers gathered together in a prayer meeting in Jerusalem. Picture the Holy Spirit empowering Barnabas with the gift of encouragement so that he could sacrificially help other believers in need. Picture the Holy Spirit telling Philip to stay near the chariot of a lonely man who needed Jesus. Now picture your life and your church today. What would it be like if the Holy Spirit had his way among his people?

God wants to fill us and empower us every day so that he can use us to draw unsaved people to Jesus and grow believers to maturity in Christ. Peter said in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17).

Some believers today are walking in the power of the Spirit and ministering to others in his power. But sadly, many are not. Ask yourself what Jesus is calling you to do. Are you fulfilling that call in the power and authority of his Holy Spirit, or are you holding back?

Jesus said that if we ask the Father for the Holy Spirit, he will give him to us (see Luke 11:13). But are we asking? We don’t want to fall into fanaticism, but neither do we want a dead life that does nothing to change hearts or build God’s kingdom. Let’s put away our excuses. Let’s ask God to send his Holy Spirit and fill us again today. As we do, God will revive us, and he will use us to carry

the flame of his love and light to a world in desperate need.