

**Face the Issue:**

Civil-rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was known for saying, “Eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America.” For many Christians, it can be hard to reach out beyond comfort zones to embrace those who are not much like them—whether it be in race, age, or social or economic status.

In his sermon, Jeremy said that we should run to others even if we think they are messy just like He ran to us in our mess.

Let’s take a look at a follower of Christ who ran to a mess.

**Into the Word:**

Philip, one of the seven chosen by the apostles to distribute food to the needy in the Book of Acts, seems to show great openness to others. After Stephen was martyred, the believers scattered and Philip went to Samaria. Most Jews wouldn’t walk through Samaritan territory or even speak to a Samaritan. This didn’t stop Phillip. While Scripture does not directly tell us what Philip thought of others unlike himself, he seems to have no reservations. In fact, witnessing to Samaritans was just the beginning for Philip.

**Read Acts 8:26–30.**

*In what ways do you see Philip’s openness in these verses? (Notice that Philip was not the least bit hesitant in running up to the chariot.)*

*What is harder for you: a) Being open to reaching out beyond your comfort zone to people unlike you; or b) Being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit? Explain.*

*The man Philip met was not just of a different race. He was also a eunuch, a castrated man. He would have undoubtedly had obvious hormonal changes because of that, and Philip would have known that Deuteronomy 23:1 forbids emasculated men from entering the assembly of God. What contemporary people groups might give you pause if the Holy Spirit said, “Go to them and stay with them?” Why would that be hard for you?*

*Think of your closest friends. How many of them are like you—in terms of life stage, economic status, race, age, political affiliation, etc.? What does this tell you?*

*In what ways could you be more open to those unlike you (and to the Holy Spirit’s leading, as Philip was)?*

## **Read Acts 8:30–38.**

Writer Shawn Young says this about being on mission:

“It recently dawned on me (much to my nausea) that I’ve thought of evangelism as a sales job. ... The problems with this paradigm are obvious. Jesus is not a product. ... Is it my job to “sell” Jesus? Is an evangelist basically a used-car salesman for the Lord?”

Jesus wasn’t a slick salesman—he wasn’t selling himself, or the kingdom, or God. ... He was giving substance to the indescribable hunger that true seekers have. He was putting words to their deep thirst. He was explaining why they felt strangely drawn to him. As an evangelist, I do not have the responsibility to create a hunger for eternal life. That’s not my job. I am only sent to point people to Jesus, let them hear his words of life, see him as he is, and check for signs of spiritual life.”

*How do you see Philip doing what Young calls “checking for signs of spiritual life”?*

*In what ways have you considered evangelism as a “sales job”? Have you witnessed in ways that you’re now not proud of?*

*How might this practice of asking and listening be different in witnessing to those not like yourself?*

*You won’t often find a non-believer reading the Bible in a chariot, but what are a few ways you could ask questions to point to Christ?*

## **Apply The Word**

One of the amazing things about Philip’s story in Acts is the result of his work in Samaria and on that dirt road between Jerusalem and Gaza. He brought people of other cultures to Christ, but also look at how the Scriptures describe those touched by Philip: Acts 8:8 reads, “So there was great joy in that city [Samaria],” and 8:39 says the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.”

*Come up with one way to reach beyond your comfort zone to someone unlike you in the next month. It doesn’t have to be a short-term mission trip to Africa; it could be speaking to that “weird” guy at Starbucks or the person you always see eating by themselves at a restaurant. Record these steps, and continue to pray that God would use Meadowdale to break boundaries like Philip did.*