



SERIES: Lessons from the 12

Philip and Evangelism

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Evangelism is the term used to describe the sharing of news with the intentions of having another person accept it. In Christianity, it is the proclamation of the gospel concerning the person and work of Jesus. Also, evangelism can be referred to as sharing one's faith with other people. Though evangelism is a difficult word to specifically define, the concept is fairly simple: As a follower of Christ, we seek to for other's to become followers of Christ as well.

All of the 12 disciples were dedicated to evangelism, just as all Christians likewise should be. However, Philip seems to be one of the most intriguing examples of what it means to participate in evangelism. Below are two instances of Philip at work in evangelism and what we can learn from him.

John 1:43-46

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **45** Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

John 12:20-22; 36-37

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. **21** So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." **22** Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus... [Jesus preaches concerning Himself and salvation] ...When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. **37** Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him...

1. Start now - Notice that Philip began to bring others to Jesus immediately after he began to follow Jesus. Evangelism is not only for the educated, specially trained, mature, long-time Christians. It is for all who follow Christ, even brand-new believers.
2. Take initiative - Philip "found" his friend to tell him about Jesus. Being a good evangelist means we go to others rather than waiting for them to come to us. It also means, just as Philip did, we initiate conversations regarding Christ, our faith, spiritual matters etc.
3. Be approachable - The Greek people who came up to Philip inquiring about Jesus must have felt comfortable approaching Philip. Don't be the condemning, judgmental, self-righteous Christian who no one can talk to.
4. Make your faith known - The Greek people must have recognized Philip as a follower of Jesus. We too should be easily identified as Christians. If we privatize our faith, we are failing to "let our light shine before men".



5. Relationships help - Part of the reason Philip was successful in bringing Nathaniel to Jesus is that they seemed to be friends. Sharing Christ with people we know can sometimes be very difficult, especially friends and family, but it is important. *Note: Never befriend someone specifically for evangelism. This is using people. Rather, befriend someone because you love them, and out of that loving relationship Christ may be introduced.
6. Extend invitations - This was Philip's primary method of evangelism, and one all, both simple and wise, can emulate. Invite people to meet Jesus. Invite people to church; bring them to youth group; give them a Bible; ask them if you could share your faith with them; give them a link to an online sermon; ask them if you can pray for them; introduce them to other people who love Jesus. The point is to expose people to Jesus, the gospel, and the work of Christ in the lives of others. Let people "come and see" for themselves.
7. Trust Jesus to do the work - Philip's statement to "come and see" shows great faith. Philip clearly feels that it is not his job to save others, but only that he introduce others to Jesus and let Him do the work of saving. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul echoes this by declaring that he does not use "lofty speech or wisdom" when telling other's of Christ, but rather simply preached the cross and let God take care of the rest. This lifts a great burden off our shoulders as evangelists, since we need not feel responsibility for other's salvation, but only their introduction to Jesus.
8. Let Jesus speak for Himself - Some Christians, out of genuine desire for other's to know Christ, feel they must defend Jesus and His Church lest it fall from attack. This is pointless; we don't need to defend Jesus or out-wit others into faith. The truth will stand no matter what. We simply need to present it.
9. Don't get into vain debates - Nathaniel's initial response to Philip's invitation was sarcastic and easily could have sparked a quarrel. Philip did well to skirt an unnecessary debate. It is rarely worth debating people. The problem is not convincing them but rather opening up their calloused heart, something only God can do.
10. Utilize your uniqueness - Philip is a Greek name, indicating that this disciple had some connection to Greek heritage. Not only did Philip bring the Greek crowd to meet Jesus, but he also spent a great deal of time preaching to Greeks after Jesus' ascension. This teaches us that we should use our own heritage, skills, connections, and personality to reach people that other Christians simply don't have the means to do.
11. Expect resistance - Nathaniel was resistant to Philip at first, but became a follower of Christ. The Greek's were resistant to Jesus and left. Expect for some people to respond well to Jesus and others not to. Like Philip, we simply present the good news and let others respond how they will.



As we can see from Philip's simplicity, evangelism is not as complicated as it is sometimes made out to be. Like most Christians, Philip wasn't a leader, but he was a good "contact man" for Jesus. Though you may feel inadequate in helping bring others to Christ, be encouraged by Philip. Our job is to be faithful, but God is the one who saves.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are some common excuses Christians give for not evangelizing? What is your most common excuse?
2. Who are people you can extend invitations to? How can you introduce them to Jesus and the gospel?
3. How does trusting Jesus to do the work of salvation take a load off your shoulders?
4. Philip could evangelize Greek's well because of his connection to that heritage. List some things that make you uniquely able to evangelize certain people that others probably could not.