

**Title: Telling your story**

**Passage: Acts 8:26 – 40**

**Date: 3 July 2022**

**Speaker: Jason Hoet**

**Series: Telling Stories**

[baptism] When listen to the faith stories today – how feel? What touched you? Personal, exciting. Sense God at work.

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**God is at work in people's lives much earlier than possibly we realise.**

Certainly, this is what Philip found. He was led by God to the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he found an Ethiopian man who was seeking God. Puzzled by what he was reading in the Prophet Isaiah.

Philip was just the right person at the right time to help him with his questions and discover what they meant.

- Philip began where the Ethiopian was at
- Philip brought him to a point of decision
- Philip lead him in response, he was baptised.
- V39 The Spirit then took Philip away and the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. He had found God!

How amazing to see God already at work in the life of the Ethiopian, prior to Philip even thinking at all about him. Reminds us how God in love responds to all those who seek him. That sharing the compelling story of Jesus might be as simple as join in what God is already up to.

We can learn from Philips sensitivity and ready obedience.

We can learn God is at work in people's lives before us, and after us. Often we are playing our part by leaving people with a better understanding of life with Jesus than when we they first met us.

**With this perspective, you realise how important it is to be listening. Listening to God, and what God is already doing in someone's life**

**We are learning how to share with others the compelling story of life with Jesus.** [slide]

The good news of life with Jesus is told in the intersection of 3 stories.

- The Story - Come to the centre of what Jesus

is about: Saviour and Lord

- My Story - People get a sense of the lived reality of the Gospel.
- (today) Your Story: Helps people know that they can relate to the story. They already have some inkling of God's great news.

**To hear YOUR story told, we start with careful Listening.**

When was the last time you felt listened to? That someone heard what you were saying and why it mattered to you?

In important conversations how we listen can be more important than what we say.

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Listening helps us understand the person's perspective, helps us pace the conversation and can help the person sharing gain clarity perspective and clarity.

Too often we struggle to really listen when sharing our faith in Jesus with someone

[Last night at a party, 2 different perspectives. It is easy to find yourself not listening but thinking of the next point to your argument.]

**Telling the compelling story of life with Jesus is too important to treat it like a debate to win.**

[especially when the people you share your faith with are most likely to be family and friends. It has to be an ongoing conversation, where people listen.]

I value this saying. I know Jesus is the answer. I just don't know what your question is yet. When I listen, I get to hear what God is already doing, and also understand your insights and questions.

Jesus' teaching style focussed on 2 things: He told a lot of stories and asked a lot of questions. By some ppl's counting the 4 Gospels record Jesus asking 183 questions and answering 3.

Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' In other words, Jesus knows THE answers, yet he uses questions. It is because questions make us explore, think, seek.

[Ever asked a teacher or mentor a question and they respond with a question...

- That's a good question, what do you think?
- I don't know, that's why I am asking you?
- Well, if you did know, what would you say?]

### **Good Questions are a vital part of careful listening.**

To help people share what God might be doing in their life. Seek to understand by learning to ask good questions.

I am learning to ask 3 kinds of helpful, genuine, questions:

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- Understand – listen to understand
- Bridge – bridge to deeper story
- Insight – use questions for clarity and insight
- Connection – connect to faith conversations.

I am in a conversation with someone, and they say they want to travel overseas.

Understand questions (what/where/how questions)

- Where do you want to go?

Bridge questions (why questions)

- Why do you want to go?

Insight questions (deeper...)

- What do you hope to find about yourself?

### **We can use questions to connect to faith conversations**

- My Christian faith really helps me work out important things in life. What helps you?
- Have you ever thought about What it is that makes a Christian?
- Do you ever think about Spiritual things?
- You have been coming to church/youth/playgroup for a while, what are your thoughts about Jesus?
- (when you bring friends/family along to significant events – like baptisms) What did you think about that?

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**In Aussie culture we don't like to talk about death, politics or religion.** Which does make it tough to talk about death, politics, or religion. On the other hand, it also means there is opportunity. Because Aussies are bad at it, we can help them.

[Adelaide Uni course – guy spotted me for the deeper convo]

I think people don't want to be preached at, bible bashed or condemned and fair enough. I do think people want to be listened to. Especially with the things which matter to them.

My hope is when someone is seeking God, God will find we are like Philip - sensitive to his Spirit and ready with our obedience.

**Today you may have come to church, and you would not call yourself a Christian.** I wonder what you have thought about this morning? Can you see how God could be at work, even by being here today? God is not far from you. It would be wonderful to hear Your story. Maybe you could share it with the person you came with, or maybe you could share it with me. We would love to listen.

Response/Prayer/Care cards