



ENTER God's presence

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

- Psalm 19:7-9

How wonderful are your ways O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! All honour and glory and praise belong to you, our creator and redeemer. We ask that you would pour your Holy Spirit out on us now as we come together to study your word and that through it, you would help us to discern and follow your will for us, your good, pleasing and perfect will. Amen



SHARE life together

1. How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. What is the hardest lesson you have had to learn about life?
4. How did your parents try to teach you the importance of obedience?

Every teacher has them! Little tricks to get the kids looking and listening. *Teacher:* 1,2,3, Look at me *Students:* 1,2 Look at you. The clapping game! Songs (Frere Jacques tune) "Are you listening? Are you listening? Everyone! Everyone! If you are listening, if you are listening, look at me, look at me." Hands Up, Stick em up, eyes on me. Teachers know that they students ability to follow instructions and grow in their learning first begins with attentive listening. It's no different for Christians. Obedience doesn't mean just following a command of somebody else, or doing what you're told to do, obedience is an act of love that listens deeply, responds faithfully, and acts willingly. Faithful listening precedes obedient acts and when we are willing to say 'yes' to God, we might just be take on a Spirit-led adventure where we see the power and timing of God on display in amazing ways.

Week beginning
Sunday 13th June 2021

Worship series: Getting Our Acts Together



VERSE for the week
The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

Acts 8:29



REMEMBER this week

Somebody
in need of Jesus
is waiting on the other side
of your faithful obedience.



LISTEN attentively

Read Acts 8:26-40

5. What do you find challenging/confusing/comforting about this text?
6. What do you make of Philip's immediate obedience to the call of God? What questions might you want answers to if you were Philip?
7. If a random person approached you to ask questions of faith, where would you go in the Bible to start explaining things?

American Pastor Stephen Furtick once said, "Great moves of God are usually preceded by simple acts of obedience." Think about the well known characters of the Bible; Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, Daniel, Esther, Jonah. All of these stories involve a great act of God which came about through a simple act of trusting obedience from one of God's people. In fact, God's greatest act came about through the obedience of Jesus all the way to his death on a cross. There is just no denying it – when God's people are obedient to him and follow where God leads, powerful things happen.

8. **If, as it seems in the Bible, obedience to God and his will brings power and blessing, what is it that makes it so hard to discern and follow God's will for us?**

In reading the account of Philip and the Ethiopian, try to imagine Philip as a modern day Christian. Try to understand what that kind of obedience looks like in today's world. Is Philip, bleary eyed, still in his pyjamas, waiting for the toast to pop and the coffee to drip. Does an angel suddenly appear, sitting on his kitchen bench telling him God needs him to go for a walk down the road into the next town or suburb. No explanation, no reason given, just the instruction, 'go walk down the main road to the next town.'

9. **If you were Philip, what kinds of questions or excuses might you be tempted to ask or give to the angel?**
10. **What is it about modern life that can make the kind of unquestioning obedience displayed by Philip so unreasonable or unrealistic to us today?**



GROW deeper

Read Romans 12:1-2

Part of our problem as modern people is that we do not like the term obedience. It has collected a lot of baggage over the years. It has become associated with other words like submission, duty, and obligation. The world around us consistently promotes the idea that the whole world exists to serve you. Any power or influence that threatens to require any kind of obedience is then seen as a threat to our individual rights and freedoms, an impingement on our civil liberties. The apostle Paul tells the Christians in Rome to avoid being sucked in by the patterns and behaviour of the world around them but instead to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

11. **What misdirected ways of thinking are possibly preventing you from following God's lead more closely?**

The wonder in this story of Philip and the Ethiopian is that Philip did not seem to hesitate at even one point on this journey. He begins by seeing an angel, then proceeds to hear directly from the Holy Spirit, then he figures the rest of it out for himself, before the Holy Spirit literally 'spirits' him away to another place. It seems that each step of obedience he takes, leads him deeper into a trusting relationship and partnership with God. Each step of obedience moves him beyond the limits he may have set for himself. He began

needing a vision, then only had audible instructions, then simply had to interpret the situation right in front of him for himself. Think about your own experience with obedience. It is not something we are born knowing – it is something that we learn as we grow. It gets easier the more in tune we are with listening to God's voice as he speaks to us through his Word.

- 12. Did you find obedience something that came fairly naturally as a child, or were you often getting into trouble? How did you learn to control and manage your behaviour?**
- 13. What does it mean to you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? What might that look like for you? What might it look like for someone just coming to faith in Jesus today?**



LIVE purposefully

Philip obeyed the command of God and he went where he was sent. Yet the 'going' was only part of the scenario. Philip also had to be ready to share and explain the Word of God to this man in the chariot. It is possible that some of us have been conditioned to read the Bible and to only reflect on what it means for me. However, the New Testament is continually calling us to look outside of ourselves, first we are told to look toward Jesus, and then towards others. What might happen if we read our Bibles while focussed not only on what it is saying to me, but also thinking about what it is telling me to say to others or do for others? God calls us to not only live like Christ but to share the good news too. We need actions and words that go together if we are going to effectively transmit the message of God's love and forgiveness for all people through Jesus Christ.

- 14. Have you ever experienced a great act of God which came through a simple act of obedience? What happened?**
- 15. What simple act of obedience will you set out to accomplish this week?**
- 16. How might you eliminate some of the excuses from your life that have stopped you from being obedient to God in the past?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for inviting us into partnership with him in his work of reconciling all of creation to himself. Thanks Jesus for his obedience to the will of Father, even though it led to death on the cross. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead us to deep listening so we can faithfully obey.
- Ask God to help us obediently follow him in whatever direction or whatever place he wants to lead us?
- Continue to pray that God might use us to reach others with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], the Holy Spirit is leading you. Amen.